

# (Re)constituting Teacher Identity for Inclusion in Urban Schools:

## A Process of Reification and Resistance

By

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## Abstract

Urban education systems serve nearly 16 million students and employ almost one million teachers in the United States. The preparation of teachers for urban settings must attend to the unique and complex historical and sociocultural context of urban communities. This includes disrupting dominant stereotypes, particularly of urban communities of color, and recognizing urban communities as vibrant and culturally rich. In addition, they must also recognize larger systems of power that influence the way in which resources are unevenly distributed between urban communities and schools. Furthermore, urban special education teacher preparation requires a comprehensive understanding of structural inequity that addresses disability and its intersection with other marginalized identities.

Critical inclusive education offers an overarching framework for preparing (special) educators to critically analyze the way in which dominant ideologies (e.g., ableism, racism, sexism, etc.) to construct normalcy. It also critiques the way these dominant norms are used to justify the exclusion of students deemed different from the dominant norm. Critical inclusive education expands the definition of inclusion beyond the physical placement of students in general education to one that includes: (1) a cultural historical dimension, (2) an understanding of community and participation, and (3) a transformative agenda. Scholars of critical inclusive teacher preparation have envisioned (special education) teachers as potential change agents in the social project of increased equity and inclusion. Yet, (special) educators face structural inequities themselves as they are socialized into communities of practice that are not conducive to critical inclusion.

This study addresses the lack of literature around the process of post-graduate teacher identity (re)constitution in their practice contexts. Using critical ethnographic methods, I studied

four graduates of a teacher preparation program with a commitment to critical inclusion and urban education. My conceptual framework for this study drew on history-in-person, communities of practice, and figured worlds to understand the ways in which participants navigated the inherent tensions between the inclusive messages of their preparation program and their practice contexts. Three themes emerged from the analysis: (1) Constructs that Endure, (2) Inclusion Gatekeepers, and (3) Teacher Identity as Advocate. In sum, participants simultaneously constructed identities as resisters and reifiers of dominant ideologies in schools. Implications for how critical inclusive teacher preparation programs can help support new teachers as they transition to practice contexts will be discussed.

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## **Chapter I: Why Study Critical Inclusive Teacher Preparation?**

### **The “Urban” in Urban Teacher Preparation**

When talking about urban teacher education, Chou and Tozer (2008) ask, “What’s urban got to do with it?” Indeed, there is little consensus around what constitutes urban teacher preparation (Chou & Tozer, 2008). Moreover, the terms urban and urban education have been taken up in problematic ways in teacher education. Urban teacher education often represents coded language for teaching primarily students of color (Viesca, 2011). The term urban is used to highlight racial difference between White teachers and non-White students as well as perceived cultural deficits associated with students of color and their families. In doing so, specific groups living in urban spaces are imagined as heterogeneous racial, ethnic, and classed populations (Viesca, 2011). This characterization of urban schools hardly does justice to the communities that inhabit them. Buendia (2011) laments that urban communities in teacher preparation have often “been reduced to racial, economic, cultural and spatial attributes that are seen as corresponding to the totality of their aspirations, experiences and intellectual proclivities” (p. 2). This is not to say that context and situated learning are not important when it comes to teacher preparation for urban schools (Chou & Tozer, 2008). In fact, urban education cannot be divorced from their sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts (Milner, Murray, Farinde, & Delale-O’Connor, 2015). Nor can cities be treated as static, monoliths pervious to the ever-changing metropolitan landscape (Buendia, 2011). Rather, urban educational spaces must be seen as complex and dynamic systems of interconnected relationships and processes. In an online periodical, Beverly Cross makes the case for a unique approach in urban education:

It has to do with the history of the creation of our cities. Where did our cities come from? What makes them different? What makes them unique and, thus, what makes education

in the big city environment so different as compared to a rural environment and a suburban environment? It is about the history of the formation of cities, and the role of education within those cities, and, of course, on the issues of politics, cultural and racial dynamics, and size (Mitchell, 2014).

Thus, teacher preparation for urban settings must consider the distinctive contextual factors of urban settings. For the 2013-2014 school year, The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) identified 190 “urban-centric” districts in the country (U.S. Department of Education, Institution of Educational Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics). Serving close to 16 million students and employing nearly one million teachers, these urban districts represent a significant portion of the teacher workforce (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics). This demands teachers who have the technical skills to deliver high quality learning opportunities targeted to the needs of the students in their classrooms. To accomplish this, teachers need the capacity to critically analyze urban settings to understand how school, community, and district factors mediate teaching and learning inside their classrooms (Matsko & Hammermas, 2014).

Teachers and teacher educators will need to conceptualize urban education systems within existing power relations connected to long-standing legacies of oppression and discrimination (Milner et al., 2015; Nygreen, 2006). For instance, access or lack thereof to businesses, public transportation, and housing opportunities can have significant impact on the socioeconomic opportunities within a community. In addition, access to infrastructure impacts rates of poverty and homelessness (Milner et al., 2015). Over a decade ago, Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) urged researchers to re-imagine the problem of educational inequity in urban schools as an educational debt owed to communities traditionally marginalized by educational

institutions. This debt, compounded over centuries, includes the historical legacies of lack of access to education for non-White students, inequitable funding between schools, and the exclusion of people of color from the civic process (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Thus, teacher education for urban settings must help teachers to recognize and critically account for the oppressive structures, contexts, and policies that lead to uneven levels of academic opportunity and attainment in their curricula, pedagogies, and interactions with students and families (Milner, 2012). Teachers cannot do this work alone or even in solidarity with other teachers, they need to have the support and involvement of their school and district administration as they teach to build systems designed for equity.

At the same time, teacher preparation programs for urban education should pivot away from the view that urban spaces are deficit or impoverished. Popular representations of urban spaces focus on “decline over renewal, segregation over collaboration, and silent struggle over shared narratives of struggle” (Kinloch, 2007, p. 38). Indeed, urban communities are sites of struggle rooted in systems of inequity, but they are also places of resistance and persistence (Matias & Liou, 2015). As educational researchers of color who grew up in urban communities themselves, Matias and Liou (2015) place a spotlight on the amazing resilience and strength that urban communities of color demonstrate as a result of surviving systemic inequity.

Unfortunately, these strengths go undeveloped or even ignored in formal educational settings (Delgado-Bernal, 2002). The dominant Eurocentric knowledge traditions that these settings privilege disproportionately draw on the cultural experiences of Whiteness. This Eurocentric perspective dictates what counts as knowledge as well as whose history, experience, and cultures are valued in education. Therefore, teacher preparation programs should help teachers to draw on the wealth of knowledge and experiences, or Funds of Knowledge that students for non-



dominant backgrounds bring to the classroom (Hogg, 2011; Moll & Gonzalez, 2004). This is not a barrier to overcome in educating students but a pedagogical resource. Drawing on students' Funds of Knowledge (Moll & Gonzalez, 2004), teachers are provided with the theoretical and methodological resources to address the multiple forms of knowledge that students from marginalized backgrounds, bring to school as a result of engaging in everyday urban life.

### **Problematizing Urban Teacher Preparation**

Historically, most teacher preparation has not focused on the political nature of teaching. Instead, it foregrounds methods, strategies, and techniques omitting the critical lens teachers need to question the prevailing policies, structures, or curriculum (Picower, 2013). Teaching is never a neutral or nonpolitical practice, nor should it be (Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, & McQuillan, 2009). This is particularly salient in urban settings, where longstanding systemic inequities have resulted in over a century of inequitable educational experiences. As public schooling became available in local communities it reprised the legacies of slavery, Jim Crow laws, and the stratification of communities by immigrant status beginning in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, many teachers do not understand or recognize the highly political nature of schooling (Picower, 2013). Behind every facet of education, there are issues of power and control that inform educational decisions that include access to school, which school, who gets promoted from grade to grade to the organization of desks in a classroom. Discussed and implemented as if these decisions are neutral, each of these decisions and many others that address sorting and categorizing children and their families stem from broader political agendas that have consequential implications for students. To understand the political repercussions of their practice, teachers need to reflect and critically assess both school-wide practices and their individual interactions with students, colleagues and families. Basic constructs should be open

for reflection. Teachers need to consider how they pose questions, build relationships, and make pedagogical decisions (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). If urban teacher preparation is to help school communities and districts to recognize and challenge systemic inequities in urban education, teachers will need the skills to recognize the political implications of their work and resist passive acceptance of political decisions. Moreover, to promote increased equity, teacher roles need re-conceptualization as contributing to the broader political project of identifying and eliminating oppression.

Unfortunately, approaches to urban education teacher preparation have fallen short of this goal. While many programs have attempted to incorporate content around diversity, multiculturalism, and culturally responsive pedagogy, they do not necessarily equip teachers with the critical lens to challenge oppression in their school contexts (Cross, 2007). These reforms are often well intentioned to account for the racial and cultural mismatch between a predominantly White teaching force and the students in urban classrooms. Yet, these programs ultimately fail to address the power differentials embedded within urban schools.

Several scholars have identified the problematic nature of this omission. For example, Banks (2015) advises that successful multicultural education involves substantial change to the “the curriculum; teaching materials; teaching and learning styles; the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of teachers and administrators; and the goals norms and culture of educational institutions” (p. 54). However, the implementation of multicultural education falls short of this more substantive intent because multicultural education content is often relegated to instruction about non-dominant groups. There are three problems with this conceptualization. One stems from the inherent marginalization, another from the notion that changes only belong to White teacher candidates. The third problem occurs because within group differences can be as great as

across group differences. The assumption that culture belongs to a set of students because of their racial or ethnic identification omits all the personal and group histories that inform the development of a single child inside their family, the institutional press of their communities, the tools and artifacts available for learning, and their own psychosocial development.

Similarly, Sleeter (2012) critiques approaches to culturally responsive pedagogy that focus on cultural celebration rather than a critical examination of power relations. Certainly, attending to culture alone will not promote equity for marginalized communities (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2006). In fact, pre-service teachers have expressed the belief that social justice work simply means demonstrating respect or tolerance for other cultures (Young, 2011). Moreover, despite being grounded in the racial mismatch between teachers and students, neither multicultural education nor culturally responsive pedagogy highlight the relational aspect of racial inequity. Ullucci and Battey (2011) found that color-blindness is a pervasive phenomenon in teacher education. By ignoring race, teacher educators and pre-service teachers can minimize racism and avoid an uncomfortable confrontation with their role in privileging Whiteness. If teacher preparation for urban settings seeks to prepare teachers with the ability to identify structural oppression, there must be space in preparation programs to explore the relational aspect of race and how it mediates one's relationship with school and society rather than just learning effective practices for the teaching the "Other" (Cross, 2007).

### **Problematizing Urban Special Education Teacher Preparation**

Urban special education teacher preparation calls for an even more comprehensive understanding of structural inequity that specifically addresses disability and its intersection with other marginalized identities (Artiles, 2013). However, disability is often missing in teacher preparation curriculum for diversity or multiculturalism (Lalvani & Broderick, 2013). Moreover,

teacher education does not take a critical approach to challenging ableism and how it permeates educational settings. Hehir (2002) defines ableism as “the devaluation of disability that results in societal attitudes that uncritically assert its better for a child to walk than roll, speak than sign, read print than read Braille, spell independently than use spell-check, and hang out with nondisabled kids as opposed to other disabled kits, etc. In short, in the eyes of many educators and society, it is preferable for disabled students to do things in the same manner as nondisabled kids” (p. 3). He argues that since these ablist assumptions saturate the culture of schools, the primary goal of education gets distilled down to overcoming disability rather than encouraging students to use the skills and modes that best suit their learning abilities and needs. Yet, ableism is rarely critically analyzed in the school context. Collins (2013) advocates for a sociocultural interrogation of disability labels and special education to “make visible the interactions, discourses, practices and, tools which influenced the construction of identity, achievement and ability” (p. 13). Drawing on Vygotsky, she describes how social processes, like disability diagnosis and labeling, are mutually constitutive and interdependent. In doing so, she places the disability within the sociocultural context of schools rather than as a deficit within a person. Yet, curricula meant to address disability in teacher preparation do not expose pre-service teachers to viewpoints that challenge ableism (Lalvani & Broderick, 2013). Indeed, approaches to disability in teacher education that emphasize impairment rather than discrimination, such as disability simulations or inspirational stories of the “supercrip” (Lalvani & Broderick, p. 470), serve only to reproduce deficit views of disability rather than disrupt disability oppression. Without knowledge of ableism and a sociocultural understanding of disability, pre-service teachers will find themselves ill equipped to challenge inequity in the schools in which they will one day work.

The experiences of students with a disability label<sup>1</sup> in urban schools connects to larger systems of oppression and marginalization along lines of race, ability, and class in the education system and society as a whole (Blanchett, 2009). Rather than highlighting the ways in which urban school systems fail to provide high-quality educational opportunities, academic failure is often blamed on individual students and their families. These students are then pathologized and labeled with a disability (Skrtic, 1995). Students of color who are labeled as having disability in urban settings are said to experience “double jeopardy” (Blanchett, Mumford, & Beachum, 2005, p. 74). Not only are they likely to face educational inequities related to urban schooling but they also are less likely than their White peers to experience inclusion. For instance, students of color who are labeled with a disability are more likely to be educated in segregated classrooms, have limited access to the general education curriculum, and achieve lower post-secondary outcomes (Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009). Moreover, the service delivery model in special education is rooted in White, middle class, English speaking cultural values. Therefore, the services and interventions offered by special education can be unsuited for non-White, poor, non-English speaking students and those living at the intersections of these social identities. However, educational discourses in special education often do not utilize sophisticated tools to understand the intersections between race and disability (Artiles, 2013). Erevelles and Minear (2010) warn against taking an additive approach in which disability is simply layered onto the study of other social categories. Rather, they advocate for investigating how social divisions are enmeshed and constructed by each other and in relationship to social constructions of these identities. To combat structural inequity, special education teachers will need to understand the intersecting

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<sup>1</sup> I use the phrase “students with a disability label” rather than “students with disabilities” to acknowledge the social construction of disability within school systems and to reject a deficit perspective that places disability within the individual.

nature of systems of oppression in urban settings and realize their role in taking more nuanced approaches in order address systemic inequity. Thus far, I have laid out ways in which teacher preparation, and specifically urban special education teacher preparation fall short in preparing socially just educators with the skills to resist oppression and promote greater equity. In the following section, I will conceptualize an approach to teacher preparation that seeks to address these issues for the purposes of increased equity and inclusion.

### **Towards Critical Inclusive Teacher Education**

The most basic premise of inclusive education promotes a process of schooling that is “about belonging, nurturing, and educating all children and youth, regardless of their differences in culture, gender, language, ability, class and ethnicity (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). However, Artiles and Kozleski (2007) note several limitations to this definition. First, it does not consider the role that power and privilege play in decisions that impact historically marginalized groups of students. This will require the use of critical theory that challenges the underlying assumptions that undergird the policies and practices of educational institutions. The lack of a systemic approach for implementing inclusion is also problematic for how inclusion gets taken up in local contexts. Moreover, in the United States, approaches to inclusion often gets reduced to students with disabilities and ignores intersectional identities. Furthermore, it does not take into account the contextual complexities of geography, cultural historical practices, and policies that influence and sustain local activity. Therefore, Artiles and Kozleski (2007) identify three core needs for a more comprehensive definition and approach to inclusive education: (1) a cultural historical dimension, (2) an understanding of community and participation, and (3) a transformative agenda. In the following section I will use these needs as an organizing framework to articulate and advocate for critical inclusive teacher education for urban settings.

## **Cultural Historical Dimension**

Approaches to inclusive education in urban settings must address the cultural history of education and the ways in which it creates uneven access to educational opportunity (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). In terms of teacher education, this means helping pre-service teachers to see their classrooms as sites of cultural and social reproduction of inequity around difference (Oyler, 2011). They will need the both the practical and theoretical tools to examine these day-to-day processes through the curriculum, their own classroom, and the school. Approaches to teacher education that merely appreciate difference will prove insufficient. Rather, teachers need to understand dominant ideologies such as racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, and class bias operate in schools and society (Oyler, 2011). This will require that pre-service teachers develop a critical lens for unearthing tacit forms of oppression. Indeed, systems for exclusion can “lurk in, and operate through, the shadowy world of what I [Slee] loosely call school cultures: an agglomeration of pedagogic practices, curriculum choices, assessment regimes and the demographic and policy context of schooling (Slee, 2010, pp. 99-100). Thus, teacher education for urban settings that promote inclusion and inclusive practices without a critical lens will ultimately prove inadequate for disrupting the status quo.

In addition to critically interrogating education systems a critical inclusive teacher education approach will also necessitate an understanding of the cultural and historical context of special education by both pre-service teachers and teacher educators. Even though inclusive education includes multiple forms of difference beyond ability, historically it has been tightly linked to special education (Slee, 2010). The challenge in special education teacher preparation is that many teacher educators and programs espouse inclusive education in a noncritical way (Slee, 2010). This is because there is resistance on the part of special educators to reject the

paradigmatic foundations of their field. Non-critical approaches to special in teacher education mostly use the medical model of disability (Ashby, 2012). According to the medical model, the perceived deficit is within the individual rather than understanding how the environment itself is disabling (Connor, Gabel, Gallagher, & Morton, 2008). These assumptions are rooted in positivist notions that there are discrete, definitive and knowable categories of difference. Furthermore, non-critical approaches to special education privilege expert knowledge about disability (Slee, 2013). They assert that students identified with disabilities are best served by specialists and minimize or silence familial and community knowledge and expertise. Critical inclusive teacher education must facilitate the critical examination of how these professional narratives and expert discourse are positioned in teacher education and schools. Indeed, special education serves as a parallel system to general education for students identified with disabilities (Waitoller, Kozleski, & Dorn, 2006). As such, school bureaucracies use special education as means to legitimize the exclusion of students with disabilities from the general education setting (Skrtic, 1995). This parallel structure results in separate processes for allocating resources, dividing labor, and developing professional teacher identities (Waitoller, et al., 2006). To make spaces for inclusive practices, critical inclusive teacher education will need to dismantle these longstanding divisions by troubling the underlying assumptions of special education such as disability categories, separate education and certification of teachers, separate schools, settings, and funding streams (Connor & Ferri, 2007). This work will prove challenging because it will demand that teacher educators and pre-service teachers abandon fundamental assumptions that have shaped their own professional educational experiences. Due to the historic a theoretical nature of the special education field (Artiles, 2013), special educators will need exposure to critical theory and thoughtful application to their practice.



To critically examine the cultural historical dimensions of urban school systems including special education, pre-service teachers and teacher educators will need to be equipped not only with the traditional tool box of approaches, techniques and strategies for differentiation but also with theoretical tools to conduct critical analysis (Broderick et al., 2012). For instance, Disabilities Studies in Education (DSE) is a way to promote understandings of disability from a social model rather than a medical model perspective (Connor et al., 2008). While DSE does not represent a monolithic theoretical approach, the one commonality that pervades the literature is the social construction of disability. This helps pre-service teachers and teacher educators to understand that disability is not inherent in all students but part of the cultural practices of schooling (Broderick et al., 2012). However, DSE represents only one critical theoretical approach (Broderick et al., 2012). DSE alone in critical inclusive education is insufficient to address other forms of socially constructed difference and their intersecting oppressions. Specifically, the historical convergence of race and disability call for more sophisticated and intersectional analyses of difference and exclusion (Artiles, 2013, Slee, 2010; Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). For instance, Annamma, Connor and Ferri (2013) combine aspects of Critical Race Theory and Disability Studies to propose a new, more complex theoretical framework that incorporates a dual analysis of race and ability called Disability Critical Race Studies, or DisCrit. Critical inclusive teacher preparation will require constant attention to the ways in which the cultural historical residue of educational inequity impacts urban educational systems such as teacher preparation and special education as well as the development and use of increasingly complex theoretical frames to help understand the relationship between socially constructed difference and oppression.

## **An Understanding of Community and Participation**

Critical inclusive teacher education will also help pre-service teachers make sense of the communities in which they will work. When teachers leave their program, they will encounter urban education systems entrenched in dominant narratives regarding difference, disability, and special education (Broderick et al., 2012). As teachers enter communities of practice, they will confront normative ways of belonging that can have a significant impact on how teachers construct their identity and enact their practice (Aritles & Kozleski, 2007). Exploring teacher identity is important for understanding the processes through which teachers make decisions regarding their practice because of their personal and professional identities (Mockler, 2011). Hammerness (2006) describes this important connection, “Developing an identity as a teacher is an important part of securing teachers’ commitment to their work and adherence to professional norms...the identities teachers develop shape their dispositions, where they place their effort, whether and how they seek out professional development opportunities, and what obligations they see as intrinsic to their role” (pp. 383-384). In a review of the literature on teacher identity, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) identify five key themes that pervade the literature. In summation, teacher identity is a dynamic construct that shifts over time through constant transformation. Additionally, teacher identity is shaped by both personal life histories and social interactions. Therefore, the study of teacher identity is complex and ongoing work that will require mediating the way in which teachers negotiate and build on their personal identities as they develop as an educator. Yet, teacher identity remains under researched in teacher education (Aritles & Kozleski, 2007; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Furthermore, there is very little evidence that the limited research that exists translates into tangible elements of teacher education curriculum. Identity is a complex construct that will require rigorous inquiry that

includes a strong theoretical understanding of identity development to guide methodological decision-making.

Artiles and Kozleski (2007) argue that inclusive education must be situated in the community of practice in which it takes place. For inclusive teacher education, this means that attention must be paid to the way that teachers engage in identity projects as they enter school communities. Since communities of practice define normative ways of being, beginning teachers will feel pressure to adopt certain identities to signal membership into the community. Since we know that schools and the actors within them operate under dominant ideologies that pathologize and exclude individuals who fall outside the norm (Leonardo & Broderick, 2007), these normative ways of being may threaten and even overpower the inclusive message of a teacher preparation program as teachers continuously negotiate their identities. Indeed, institutional practices establish norms and create precedents for how participants think about and discuss issues such as inclusion (Artiles, et al., 2006). Often, inclusive education in school contexts can be reduced to battles over additional resources and supports for students to help students access the general education curriculum instead of designing the curriculum for a broad array of needs (Slee, 2013). Gehrke and Cocchiarella (2013) found that graduates from their inclusive teacher preparation program reported disconnects between the knowledge presented in their coursework and the reality they observed in their fieldwork experiences. Without strategies to critically analyze and make sense of these discrepancies, pre-service teachers reported a lack of confidence in their ability to implement inclusion.

Critical inclusive teacher education will need to prepare teachers who can shift their gaze between individual student needs and the institutional traditions and practices of urban schools that determine and marginalize difference by understanding critical theory as described in the

previous section (Oyler, 2011). One way to accomplish this is through the development of professional learning communities in which inclusive teacher preparation programs partner with local urban school districts (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2013). Unlike one-directional partnerships that operate as distinct, parallel structures, these partnerships will need to be dynamic and interconnected. Moreover, they will need to consider the role of power and privilege in these relationships and the value that is placed on different sources of knowledge. Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) state that, “Inclusive education demands the construction of meaningful partnerships that encompass overlapping kinds of expertise, including the expertise of families and students” (p. 38). In this way, inclusive teacher preparation is informed by the unique flavor of local school practices and the needs of students and their families in urban communities. At the same time, local school districts learn from the intellectual and theoretical work of the inclusive teacher preparation program. This reciprocal relationship will help to work through the disjunctions between the inclusive message of the preparation program and the communities of practice in which teachers will work. Thus, critical inclusive teacher education cannot operate distinctly from real-world urban educational contexts. Rather, they will need to design their programs with an understanding of how inclusion will be challenged by dominant schooling practices and how their graduates will negotiate those tensions in practice.

### **A Transformative Agenda**

Slee (2013) describes inclusive education as “a commitment to particular values, which accounts for a wish to overcome exclusion and promote inclusion” (p. 308). Indeed, inclusive education is not just a noun but also a verb, meaning that is an ongoing project to resist oppression and transform school sites. Inclusion will challenge the business as usual approach in urban schools (Slee, 2013) and require fundamental changes to schooling practices (Narian,

2016). Artiles and Kozleski (2007) describe a transformative agenda for inclusion as an intellectual, moral and political act. It means making visible the ways in which school systems have ignored, silenced, and excluded certain groups of students and privileged others. They describe this work as “praxis” (p. 362) or the pairing of critical reflection with action. Praxis for inclusion requires ongoing attention to ensure that students and families on the margins are continually brought back into the community and resist reverting to the status quo.

To bring about transformation, teachers must understand how inclusion is tied to a larger agenda for social change in urban schools. Teachers will need to take an active and deliberate role in the transformation of school systems (Broderick et al., 2012). This will require vigorous critique of special education and the ways in which it is used to legitimize the segregation of students with disabilities. In addition, they will have to also critique it as a vehicle for the disproportionate segregation of students of color from the general education classroom. The aim is that through anti-oppressive discourse, teachers will go into schools and actively work against oppressive structures related to difference and exclusion (Narian, 2014). It will be the role of the teacher preparation program to foster activist communities that can extend beyond preparation and into teachers’ careers.

In this section, I have described a critical inclusive teacher preparation approach that uses critical theory to critique dominant schooling practices while promoting an expansive notion of inclusion that accounts for the variety of difference in school systems and how individuals experience intersecting forms of oppression due to the meaning that is brought to bear on their social identities. Artiles and Kozleski (2007) identify three core needs for a more comprehensive definition and approach to inclusive education: (1) a cultural historical dimension, (2) an understanding of community and participation, and (3) a transformative agenda. Indeed, these

core needs are appropriate for inclusive teacher education as well and will need to be shape the design of teacher preparation program coursework, curricula, and fieldwork experiences.

### **Limited Opportunities for Resistance and Transformation**

Thus far, I have advocated for an approach for teacher education, particularly for special education teachers, that prepares them to critically examine structural inequity, challenge oppressive structures, and promote increased equity in urban schools. However, it is important to understand that teachers in urban settings are not immune to structural inequity themselves (Farber & Azar, 1999; Milner, 2008). Teachers are often one of the groups typically blamed for the perceived lack of educational attainment in urban settings (Farber & Azar, 1999). This critique, rooted in sexist notions in a field comprised primarily of women, promote of deficit view of the people, including teachers, who inhabit urban spaces (Milner, 2008). These deficit theories blame teachers rather than focusing on systemic, institutional and bureaucratic constraints that can prevent teachers and students in urban settings from reaching their potential. As a result, groups that lodge these critiques, absolve themselves of their own role in structural inequity and succeed in perpetuating the status quo (Farber & Azar, 1999). One such example of these deficit discourses in urban settings is neoliberal reform (Crawford-Garret & Riley, 2006). These reforms promote ideologies of individual self-interest and the unrestricted flow of capital. In urban schools, it manifests itself as top down mandates for teachers and strictly controlled curricula. In this type of environment teachers have few opportunities to advocate for equity, challenge the dominant culture, and transform the spaces in which they work.

### **The Present Study**

My project was a multi-school site study in and around a large mid-western city. I privileged urban educational settings because of their historic link to pervasive systemic inequity

due to “racism, discrimination, and other forms of oppression” (Milner, 2015, p. 530). This enabled me to situate my participants and their communities of practice within the larger sociocultural context of urban life. Center City and its schools have similarities to other urban educational contexts in that it reflects the historic link between urban schools and systemic inequity in that the population is marked by poverty and racial segregation. The State Equity Plan (2015) for the state in which the city is in defines “high-poverty schools” according to the number of students receiving free and reduced priced lunch (FRPL). Eighteen of the state’s top 110 high-poverty schools, are in the same city of my study. The plan defines “high-minority schools” as schools with the highest percentages of non-White students, including Hispanic students. 8 of the state’s top 110 “high-minority” schools are also in the same metro area. Certainly, poverty and racial segregation do not predetermine poor educational outcomes or even universal educational experiences (Milner, 2015). However, the Sate Equity Plan provides data that demonstrates how schools that fit their high-poverty and high-minority definitions experience marginalization along several teacher workforce data points when compared to affluent schools. For instance, high-poverty and high-minority schools have less effective teachers overall based on the state educator evaluation system. 84.7 percent of teachers in affluent schools are considered effective, while only 78.8 percent and 78.5 percent in high-poverty and high-minority schools respectively are considered effective. However, this data point should not be viewed as a simplistic variable but rather an outgrowth of the constraints placed upon teachers in urban contexts (Farber & Azar, 1999). Teachers in high-poverty schools have on average 9.97 years of experience and teachers in high-minority schools have only 10.7 years of experience. In contrast, teachers in the most affluent schools have an average of 13.72 years of experience. Similarly, high-poverty and high-minority schools experience low levels of

teacher retention. High-minority schools retain 69.2 percent of teachers and high-poverty schools retain 68.9 percent of teachers. On the other hand, the most affluent schools boast an 85.5 percent retention rate. There are also discrepancies between the level of support that new teachers receive. While only 7.3 percent of first-year teachers in low-poverty schools reported not having a mentor, 17.5 percent of teachers in high-minority schools do not get the benefit of a mentor during their first year. Thus, to various degrees, teachers in the state's urban areas, such as city where this study took place, work in education systems with lower levels of experience, consistency, and support than their more affluent counterparts.

Table 1

*State Equity Plan Data on Teachers by School Type*

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Highest 5 percent</u> <u>minority</u>	<u>Highest 5 percent</u> <u>FRPL</u>	<u>Lowest 5 percent</u> <u>FRPL</u>
Effectiveness Index Overall Teacher Impact	78.5%	78.8%	84.7%
Teacher Avg. Years Experience	10.7	9.97	13.72
Teacher Retention Rate 1 yr	69.2%	68.9%	81.2%
First-year Teachers Assigned a Mentor	82.5%	78.6%	97.5%

*Note.* Avg.= average; yr. = year; FRPL= Free and Reduced Price Lunch; Highest 5 percent minority= “high minority schools”; Highest 5 percent FRPL= “high poverty schools”; Lowest 5 percent FRPL= “low poverty schools” or “affluent schools”

The State Equity Plan (2015) uses focus groups comprised of representatives from 110 high-poverty schools and 315 rural schools. These data help to explain the social processes at play in creating these discrepancies between school contexts throughout the state. Focus groups



report that the current teacher pipeline is insufficient to address the complexities of urban settings for the purposes of promoting equity. One theme that emerged from the focus groups is that new teachers seek to change the culture of urban settings rather than to build relationships and understanding of difference. Moreover, teachers do not pursue positions in urban settings. The focus groups report that students perceive more affluent suburban schools as locations where they can flourish as educators. They actively avoid working in urban settings because they perceive them as failing. In my study, I analyzed my participant's experiences considering the urban settings in which they work. I actively made connections to state wide patterns of systemic inequity for teachers in urban contexts and ways in which their experiences disconfirmed these trends.

While a critical approach to inclusive teacher education can serve to prepare special educators, who can challenge structural inequities in urban educational settings, scant attention has been paid to the process through which graduates of inclusive teacher education programs (re)constitute their teacher identity as they work in schools that promote dominant ideologies that perpetuate marginalization for certain groups of students (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). The purpose of my study is to understand the social processes through which special educators (re) negotiate their identity within the power dynamics of their communities of practice. In doing so, I will examine ways in which these teachers reify dominant ideologies but also how they demonstrate resistance by drawing on their teacher preparation experience and personal histories. My methods seek to answer three research questions:

How do urban special education teachers:

- 1) use their knowledge from (a) their preparation program and (b) their personal histories to understand and construct their urban special education teacher identity?

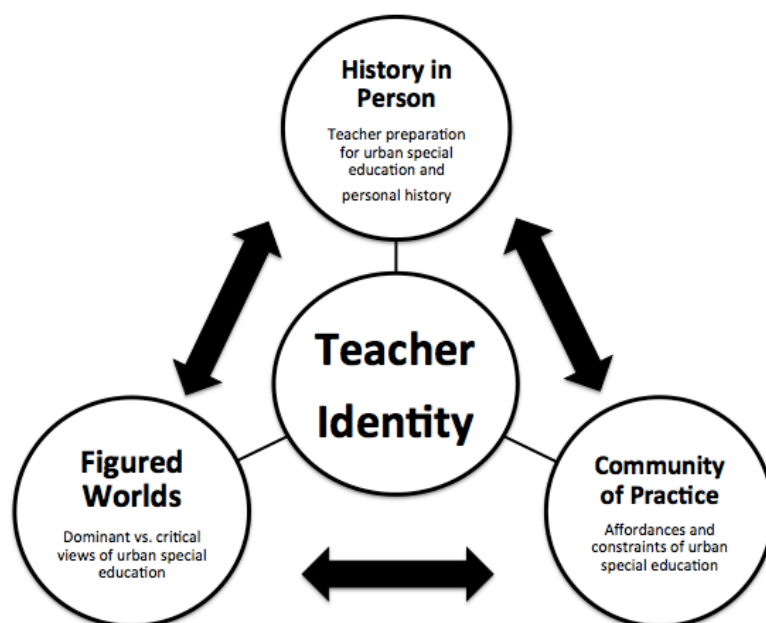
- 2) engage in present activity through the mutual constitution of the norms, values, and rules of the community of practice and their teacher identity?
- 3) use dominant versus critical conceptions of special education to figure the world of special education, their role within it, and its impact on their teacher identity?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Mockler (2011) asserts that teacher identity development needs to be harnessed as a practical and political tool. By this she means that teachers need to understand their identity within the local context and the broader societal structure. In this way, they can connect their decision-making and practices to alter the power dynamics in which they work. Mockler (2011) argues that this awareness can lead to a disruption of dominant discourses in schools. I argue that these points of resistance are important to study to harness it as a tool for social justice in schools to promote inclusion. It is important to explore the role of teacher identity development for inclusion for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates how even in the face of structural inequity, teachers can show resistance through their practice. Secondly, it highlights ways in which individuals can resist hegemonic structures and, ultimately, promote social change for increased inclusivity. Indeed, demonstrations of human agency by teachers can serve as a social and political tool to challenge injustice in its many forms. However, the way in which urban special education teachers view special education and their role within it may have implications for how they use their agency for uneven levels of inclusivity and equity.

This study will explore how graduates of an inclusive teacher education program engage in identity work within communities of practice using the (Re)Constituting Teacher Identity Conceptual Framework (See Figure 1). Artiles and Kozleski (2007) argue that this transition from an inclusive teacher preparation program into communities of practice remains an

underexplore area of the research on inclusive teacher education. In this section, I will connect the issues I presented in the first section with urban special education teacher preparation to the theoretical frames I will use in my analysis. The goal of this endeavor is to inform the way in which critical inclusive teacher education programs prepare urban special educators.



*Figure 1.* (Re)Constitution of teacher identity conceptual framework. This figure shows how the three theoretical prongs of my conceptual framework relate to each other in the present study.

## Identity

This study will draw on the conceptualization of identity put forth in the work of Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) to investigate teacher identity. Drawing on the work of Vygotsky and Mead, Holland and her colleagues argue that identity development occurs through an interaction of the personal world and the communal space in which individuals engage with culture and social interactions. From this vantage point, identity is actively (re)constituted through ongoing participation in present activity. In this process, participants and groups appropriate cultural materials in order to continuously (re)constitute their personal and collective

identity. In sum, Holland and colleagues describe the process of identity formation as an ongoing process of (re)constitution through the interaction of personal history and social activity.

**Urban Special Educator Identity.** I will take up the conceptualization of identity used by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) in order to investigate teacher identity. Specifically, I will look at special education graduates of an inclusive teacher preparation program as they negotiate their teacher identity in urban settings. Exploring teacher identity is important to understanding the way special education teachers make decisions regarding their practice as a result of their professional identity (Mockler, 2011). Hammerness (2006) describes this connection, “Developing an identity as a teacher is an important part of securing teachers’ commitment to their work and adherence to professional norms...the identities teachers develop shape their dispositions, where they place their effort, whether and how they seek out professional development opportunities, and what obligations they see as intrinsic to their role” (pp. 383-384). The study of teacher identity has the potential to inform the field’s understanding of not only teachers’ decisions-making processes and practices but also their impact on their school community and their students.

This study is not the first to explore teacher identity as a construct. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) conducted a review of the literature on teacher identity and identified five key themes that pervade the literature. Much like Holland and colleagues (1998), most authors agree that teacher identity is a dynamic construct that shifts over time through constant transformation. Additionally, teacher identity is shaped by both personal life histories and social interactions. In much of the literature on teacher identity, the focus is on professional settings for identity development. These connections between my theoretical framing of identity along with the

prevailing literature on teacher identity will inform the ways in which I analyze the data in this project.

### **History in Person**

The authors use “history in person” to describe the relationship between the personal aspects of identity. By this they mean that individuals bring the residue of their personal histories into present activity, which in turn spurs transformation. However, the understanding of identity must be couched in the historical legacies of power and privilege that are brought to bear in both “history in person” as well as daily cultural and social activity (Holland & Lave, 2007). For instance, the degree and type of participation is contingent on the participant’s position. This position is not only self-authored but also afforded by social interaction. Thus, not all participants hold the same positions. Furthermore, identity development is based on the availability of certain cultural tools to the participant. The ability to appropriate material and symbolic tools in social spaces is unevenly distributed across socially identified groups. Therefore, the social identities that individual claim or others place upon them, will determine both the degree of participation and ability to use specific cultural tools. While certain identity groups may experience restrictions, the process of identity formation is not passive. The ultimate paradox of this conceptualization of identity is that *humans are both social products and social producers*.

The participants in this study brought their “history in person” to their work. This history included the knowledge and skills gleaned from their teacher preparation program as well as their personal histories, colored by their own social identities and the meaning brought to bear on these identities. At times, the inclusive ideal of their preparation programs conflicted with some of the prevailing practices within their schools (Broderick et al., 2012; Narian, 2014). I explored

how they negotiated these tensions drawing on the cultural tools acquired through these histories. For instance, the way that they take up critical theory from their preparation program in order to understand educational oppression and how it limits inclusion. This way, I explored what elements of teacher preparation teachers continue to draw on in practice as well as which elements got subsumed by dominant ideologies of their contexts.

### **Figured Worlds**

From teachers' personal histories and previous experiences such as their teacher preparation, they develop understandings of their professional identity (Thorius, 2016). According to Holland et al. (1998), the social spaces in which this identity work occurs are termed "figured worlds" or "a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts and particular outcomes are over others" (p. 52). Figured worlds serve as collectively imagined abstractions of reality made manifest through activity. Individuals take up figured worlds as a cultural resource to draw on to guide, develop expectations for, or interpret their everyday actions those of other actors. Indeed, figured worlds are simultaneously historical constructions and actively constructed by those within them. Importantly, they are also situated within the forces of institutional power and actors hold hierarchical levels of power. Therefore, participation in figured worlds can be limited or entirely denied. The ways in which individuals chose to take up cultural tools helps them to mold figured worlds as they transform their identity.

For urban special educations, the way that they come to understand their figured worlds impacts the way they make sense of their professional identity and impacts the ways in which they perform their professional duties. Specifically, in this study, I examined how participants engage in the figured world of urban special education teaching. This figured world is molded

over time by their own educational experiences, teacher preparation and the pre-existing figured world of urban special education within their community of practice (Thorius, 2016). I drew connections between the figured worlds of participants to dominant narratives around urbanicity, (dis)ability, difference and inclusion. While the participants experienced a teacher preparation program that promoted embraced the social construction of disability, the dominant narrative in their schools promoted a medical model of special education. The degree to which participants draw on dominant versus critical inclusive notions of special education in the figured world of urban special education shaped their professional identities and the ways in which they interacted with students and their communities.

### **Communities of Practice**

Since humans bring their history in person to local practice and operate within collective imaginings of their figured world, it is important to understand the cultural and social environment in which they occur. Communities of practice will be used as an analytical tool to investigate the contexts in which graduates of inclusive teacher preparation programs will (re)constitute their identities. The term “communities of practice” comes from situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This theory rejects the notion of abstract learning in favor of the tacit learning processes that occur because of participation in the practices of a community and their impact on identity development. Communities of practice are the context in which individuals develop practices (influenced by norms and values) through which identities are deemed appropriate or inappropriate in that community (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham, & Clark, 2006). Handley and her colleagues (2006) warn against viewing communities of practice as homogenous entities because participants bring a multiplicity of experiences to them from beyond and across multiple communities. Often these experiences in different communities can

create tensions in identity development and must continuously be negotiated. However, they can be opportunities for participants to exert agency based on how they internalize, challenge, or reject the existing practices of a given community.

In my analysis, I situated teachers' identity development within the affordances and constraints of their community of practice. Indeed, communities of practice dictate normative ways of belonging and signal which practices are acceptable (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). The dynamic between identity-development and forms of participation are integral to the ways that individuals internalize, challenge, or reject the existing practices of their community (Handley et al., 2006). Therefore, I explored teachers' identity work considering the dominant rules, norms, and values of their school. Even if they held a critical view of special education from their teacher preparation programs, their ability to express or utilize them in practice was contingent based on pre-existing systemic ideologies around special education and how the teachers situate themselves within their schools. Moreover, the community of practice influenced their understanding of their preparation in ways that, at times, overshadowed the influence of their teacher preparation altogether.

### **Conclusion**

Researchers and teacher educators have proposed inclusive teacher education as one means to address to the complexities of education, particularly urban special education, that lead to systems of interlocking oppression for students with disability labels (Ashby, 2012; Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, & Trezek, 2008; Dotger & Ashby, 2010; Gehreke & Cocciarella, 2013; Oyler, 2011; Zeichner, 2010). This version of inclusive teacher education rejects a limited scope of inclusion as a place but rather a critical conceptual understanding of school organizations (Ashby, 2012; Oyler, 2011). Ultimately, these programs seek to prepare educators, including but



not limited to special education teachers, to be agents of change in their schools. Yet, dominant ideologies that pathologize and marginalize difference remain deeply embedded within communities of practice and stifle social change. The ways in which teachers negotiate the tensions that emerge between the inclusive message of their preparation and their communities of practice will have implications on the way that they construct their teacher identity and, ultimately, position themselves to either reify or subvert marginalizing practices. A deeper understanding of these processes will help to inform the way urban special education teachers are prepared for the complexities of their role with the goal of promoting greater inclusivity and equity.

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

Before being taken up in education, identity served as a theoretical construct for scholars in fields such as psychology (Erickson, 1959), philosophy (Mead, 1934), anthropology, and sociology (Holland, Lachioctte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). However, the ways in which scholars theorize identity can vary dramatically even in the same field. Since this project will draw on the Holland and colleague's approach to identity, the introduction to this literature review will explore the evolution of identity within anthropology while also citing examples of its usage. Next, I will provide examples of how educational researchers have drawn on these traditions to explore identity in education but specifically teacher identity. In doing so, I will build on my conceptual framework from Chapter 1 to further advance the way I will use identity in this project and frame the approach I will take to review the extant literature.

### **Towards a Sociocultural Understanding of Identity**

Holland and colleagues (1998) describe two mainstream anthropological approaches to understanding interaction of culture and identity. Universalists borrow from traditional psychology where the individual self or identity is something innate, enduring, and universal. Thus, all humans are born with the same essential self. Indeed, the assumptions underlying the essential self reify the dominant culture in anthropological study (e.g. White, male). The manifestation of difference is merely the decorative trimmings of individual cultures. From this perspective, various cultural or social groups can be placed in a hierarchy based on their degree of difference from the essential norm. On the other extreme are culturalists who view the self as malleable based on the cultural setting. However, the culturalist view uses static visions of culture. They assume similarity of experience across cultural groups and do not account for shifts over time. While most anthropologists do not firmly rest on either extreme, through the 1970s

various theorists wrestled with the degree to which the self is universal or molded by essentialist views of culture.

Then the field faced a period of dissonance called the critical disruption (Holland et al., 1998). This period of reflection critiqued the field anthropology for its dubious connections with imperialism and its over emphasis on the male gaze. Importantly, the critical disruption brought issues in the field associated with hegemonic power and local struggle to the foreground. It challenged anthropologists to acknowledge and understand the way that their own situated subjectivity influenced representations of cultural groups. Importantly for this literature review, it also revealed the opened up space for the new visions of the self beyond universalist and culturist approaches. Instead, anthropologists began to view the self through a sociocultural lens in which discourses and practices are tools through which people continually (re)constitute the self within contexts of power. In this sense, neither the self nor culture are static but rather unbounded constructs being made and (re)made through activity.

From this lens, anthropologists like Holland and her colleagues, engage in sociocultural research in anthropology on identity (Holland & Lachiocotte, 2007). Influenced by Mead's work on identity, they see people forming multiple identities based on their culturally and historically constituted imaginings of the roles and positions that they hold in figured worlds. Drawing on Vygotsky, they assert that individuals engage in self-organizing based on these imaginings and thus come to use cultural artifacts such as discourse to co-construct the social and cultural worlds that they inhabit. The ways in which people organize themselves to signify certain positions in these worlds represents Vygotsky's notion of agency, or engagement in improvisation, opens space for new identities beyond existing power structures.

However, the use of agency needs to be couched in terms of power status, and relative privilege within and across figured worlds. Positional or relational identity mediates action based on how actors see themselves in relation to others and how others position them (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 2008). In the following section, I will present two examples of how Holland and colleagues have taken up a sociocultural understanding of identity in their work.

### **Example of Sociocultural Research on Identity**

Holland and Correal (2013) explore the social processes of the second wave feminist movement in Bogotá, Colombia during the 1970s. In their study, they sought to understand how women used their feminist identity to engage in the political process. The authors describe the process of feminist identity development for Colombian women as slow and non-linear. As residents of the nation's capital and international center, Bogotá's women regularly experienced exposure to liberal ideology and new global ideas. As such, their imagined world of womanhood began to change as women started seeing the personal and collective consequences of being a female in a patriarchal society. However, the way women analyzed patriarchal power was primarily one-directional. Their feminist identity did not consider how patriarchal power and other powers get reproduced within their feminist identity. As a result, the authors conclude that feminists developed a notion of the universal woman as the nation's real revolutionary and agent of change. She alone owned and professed truth. This dominant feminist identity did not recognize the diversity of women in Colombia nor the diversity experience of oppression. In their discussion, the authors recommend that when engaging in identity development for social change it is important to

...interiorize the power that dominated us as a part of our identity. It requires a conscious questioning and practicing of how to deconstruct those kinds of subjectivities and powers

for domination, and how to construct new ones for emancipation. If we are imagining new words, we must imagine new subjects, alternative forms of powers and ways those subjects with been constructed (p. 143).

This analysis follows the type of sociocultural anthropological research summarized in the previous section. The way in which the women of Bogotá imagined the world of womanhood and oppression experienced because of patriarchal power, influenced the way that they organized their work and took political action. To relate this to theoretical concepts, their use of cultural artifacts emerged from their particular figured worlds, without ongoing interrogation of the role that patriarchal power influenced their own sense of oppression and courses of action.

Furthermore, the authors draw conclusions about how this period contributed to social change in the country for women. Importantly for a sociocultural analysis, the authors embedded the social processes of the feminist movement within the larger cultural historical context of the country. For instance, the authors situate the feminist movement within Colombia's position as a modern, post-colonial nation. The authors contextualize this historical legacy in patterns of ignoring difference and using violence to negate resistance. This history also mediated the trajectory of the feminist movement in that it aligned itself with the Left party. Historically, this party was more progressive than the Right and, as such, sympathized with their mission to increase power for women in private and public cultural spheres. Throughout history, the Left has consistently failed to recognize and meet the demands of historically marginalized groups in Colombia such as the indigenous population, people of Afro-decent, and people who identify with non-heterosexual sexual orientations. In their analysis, they conclude that the feminist movement failed to achieve the sweeping social changes it sought because the movement itself did not thoroughly attend to the dialectical interaction between their discourse, actions, and

existing power structures. To draw on theoretical notions of agency, the sociocultural context in Bogotá in the 1970s curtailed the movements' agentic possibilities. By using a sociocultural analysis, the authors can draw conclusions about the impact of the movement based on how it was mediated by the sociocultural context.

In this introduction, summarized the anthropological tradition of sociocultural identity research that I will use in my study and provided an example. I will use this view of identity in the present study. Still, I am not the first to bring these theories to the field of education. In the next section I will make the case for the importance of sociocultural approaches in educational research and provide examples. I will also point out how this work contributes to the field of educational research, particularly teacher preparation for critical inclusion.

### **Teacher Identity as a Theoretical Construct in Education**

In the field of education, sociocultural research on identity has historically stood outside of mainstream educational research. In 1986, Frederick Erickson made the case for “interpretive research” in education. He operationalizes this approach as a focus on the *meanings* behind the actions of specific actors. With its roots in the social sciences, he advocates for an interpretive lens to understand how humans make sense of their environment and how that understanding guides their actions. This contrasts with positivist approaches in mainstream educational research that draws on the natural sciences. These approaches see human behavior in mechanical and consistent. Thereby, each input has a predictable output. Interpretive research, on the other hands, provides empirical evidence to

...enable the researcher and practitioners to become much more specific in their understanding of the inherent variation from classroom to classroom. This means

building better theory about the social and cognitive organization of forms of classroom life (p. 133).

In other words, interpretative methods consider the messiness and uneven nature of teaching and learning providing for a situated view of the lived classroom. Moreover, Erickson (1986) argues that interrogating the ways in which teachers and students perform their social identity in their classroom can demonstrate connections between local activity and non-local elements of culture and society. Thus, interpretive research challenges, contests, and builds sociocultural theories through empirical data.

Sociocultural research on identity in special education is particularly contentious based on the historical origins of the field. The interpretive vs. positivist research approaches in special education are even more salient because special education itself is grounded in psychology and biology (Skrtic, 1995). Historically, special education based itself in behavioristic theory resulting in a cycle of diagnosis and prescriptive instructional practices (Skrtic, 1995). From this tradition, special education research seeks out universal truths regarding teaching and learning. Thus, special education professionals maintain their expert status by being the cultivators and bearers of this truth (Skrtic, 1995). Skrtic's main critique of the field is based upon its non-critical approach to the guiding assumptions on which it is premised and the implications of these assumptions on special education practice. Ferguson and Ferguson (1995) argue that interpretivist approaches to research in special education allow researchers not to situate disability as a fact waiting to be discovered. Rather it is an experience waiting to be described by the researcher with the goal is to seek understanding rather than objective fact. Similarly, Collins (2013) advocates for social constructivist theory to inform research on disability in schools. Collins (2013) uses social constructivist theory to consider how interactions are shaped by the

larger sociocultural context in which they occur. She highlights the need to understand individual's actions as the interaction between environment and individual and how they both mutually constitute each other. As a result, this type of research can help to dislodge assumptions around ability and competence within school settings.

The dominant approach in special education has been the medical model, which identifies disability as a biological impairment of the person (Artiles, 2013). One of the tangible consequences of using the medical model in special education is the disproportionate representation of students of color (Artiles, 2013). Research rooted in the medical model is mainly quantitative and does not consider cultural processes. Their approach to identity is unitary and essentializes cultural groups. This ignores the intersection of various identities such as race, ability, class, and gender that interact in a multitude of ways to produce various educational experiences of oppression. Variable markers of differences are viewed as universal and strips identity of the historical and structural influences that mediate people's actions and decisions. For disproportionality, this negates the problematic historical intertwining of race and disability. By naturalizing the racialization of disabilities, there is the potential of legitimizing racial disproportionality in special education. Therefore, it is important to use methods that come from more interpretivist lenses in special education to trouble the underlying assumptions of the field that can lead to social inequities such as disproportionality.

For example, Harry and Klingner (2006) explored the social processes that led to disproportionate representation in special education. Their focus on the social processes revealed what they called "soft places" such as the unofficial, undocumented aspects of professional practice that prove extremely powerful in the special education identification and placement process. This seemingly objective and scientific process was exposed as highly subjective on the



part of school psychologists. Therefore, the problem of disproportionality could not be a 'natural' function of ability but rather a decision making process fraught with the social and historical residue at the intersection of race, ability, and schooling. This focus on the social processes is an affordance of sociocultural interpretive research in education that can drive towards increased educational equity.

Identity, as it is used for sociocultural research in anthropology, is a useful construct in education. Gee (2000) proposes identity as a useful construct in education because it can account for an individual's membership in multiple social groups in a way that static categories such as race, gender, class, and ability cannot capture. In other words, it considers how these categories interact with one another. Moreover, it can also account for how individuals use these social categories to position themselves and simultaneously are positioned within institutions such as schools. Sfard and Prusak (2005) describe the utility of identity for educational researchers who want to link learning and the sociocultural context. Alternative constructs to identity such as personality, character, and nature, have the connotation of being natural or biological, which do not allow for a sociocultural analysis of human action.

In this project, I will look at teacher identity specifically. In doing so, I must acknowledge that teachers hold institutional power in their positions, and as such, have the potential to perpetuate inequality. However, educators are socialized into communities of practice that dictate social norms, rules and values that ultimately shape their identities (Wegner, 1998). It is important to understand these social processes and their impact on their activity to open spaces for critical reflection. As Harry and Klingner (2006) demonstrate, this is of significance in special education since the field perpetuates a dubious sense of rational objectivity when there is a great deal of subjective decision making. Furthermore, this has

relevance for teacher education. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) identify teacher preparation as the ideal starting point for awareness of and the need for ongoing identity development. They argue that pre-service teachers need awareness and reflective tools to (re)negotiate their teacher identity as it is challenged and contracted in their places of employment. For these reasons, I will borrow from Dorothy Holland's work in the field of anthropology to conduct sociocultural research on identity for beginning special education teachers in urban settings. In the next section, I will explain how I used my conceptual framework from Chapter 1 to identify and review the literature in this chapter.

### **Approaches to Literature Review**

Ravitch and Riggan (2012) describe a conceptual framework as “an argument about why the topic one wishes to study matters, and why the means proposed to study it are appropriate and rigorous” (p. 7). Researchers use conceptual frameworks to clearly articulate and situate their analytical approaches based on theoretical and empirical concepts they draw from. Conceptual frameworks guide the research process from the questions that are asked, to how data gets collected, and the analytical approach used to explore the data. The conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 1 (Figure 1) will guide my review of the literature. The explicit use of a conceptual framework for the purposes of locating and analyzing the literature enables me to make my analytical framing explicit. Charmaz (2008) warns against imposing such a framework without openness to disconfirming evidence. Thus, a dual purpose of my conceptual framework is to expose ways in which existing theory or scholarship could be contested through emergent theories (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). Therefore, my conceptual frameworks both enhanced my analytical toolset but also helped identify the shortcomings of my selected theories and

opportunities for refinement. Based on my conceptual framework, three questions guided my review of the literature:

1. What is known about the impact of history in person on teacher identity development in urban schools?
2. What is known about how teachers understand the figured worlds of education, urban education, special education and inclusive education and its impact on teacher identity development?
3. What is known about teacher identity development within the affordances and constraints of urban schools as communities of practice?

## **Methods**

The literature selected to answer these questions used two overarching inclusion criteria. Since I will use a sociocultural approach to identity development (Holland et al., 1998) I reviewed literature that specifically drew on the same theoretical traditions as my own project (history in person, figured worlds, communities of practice). This included literature that specifically used these tools as analytical constructs but also literature that cited these theories as influencing their conceptions of teacher identity development. In addition, I selected literature situated in urban contexts. I assert that context matters given that the historical and cultural legacies of systemic oppression in urban schools (Milner, Murray, Farinde, & Delale-O'Connor, 2015) have implications for the ways in which teachers are prepared and inducted into school systems. Therefore, the literature specifically looks at how teacher identity development occurs through interaction with their specific urban contexts.

Using the three guiding questions from my conceptual framework, I used search terms such as “teacher identity,” “teacher + identity,” “urban school/s,” “urban education,” “history in

person,” “community/ies of practice,” and “figured world/s.” I used Google Scholar, PsychInfo, Google Books, and JSTOR as the primary databases for this search. Only empirical studies from peer-reviewed journals were included. In the following section I will synthesize the information contained across these studies.

### **History in Person: Teaching as Contentious Local Practice**

Holland and Lave (2001) assert that people are social, cultural, and historical beings. Thus, identity formation must be examined through a lens that understands people as historically produced agents or “history in person” (Holland & Lave, 2001; 2009). History in person involves a complex “constellation of relations” (Holland & Lave, 2001, p. 4) including “all of the multiple authored and positioned selves, identities, cultural forms, and local and far-reaching struggles, given together in practice” (p. 30). Even though the name suggests that individuals carry a history around inside of them, history in person is relational. In other words, it is made in part through experience and participation in different groups but also the social categories that are put upon individuals such as race, gender, ability, etc. It is constantly being (re)produced through experiences and interactions and, thus, cannot be fully captured by the aforementioned global identities. For these reasons, investigating history in person must start with local practice. This may seem counterintuitive since the term history harkens to the past. However, history in person is really the process of historical residue, both intimate and from larger historical narratives, being brought to bear in everyday activity.

Holland and Lave (2001; 2009) then use the term “contentious local practice” to describe daily activities. Contentious underscores the interaction of local practice with larger narratives of historical, cultural, and political-economic struggles, or what are referred to as “historically institutionalized struggles” or “enduring struggles” in the literature (Holland & Lave, 2009). By

enduring struggles, the authors do not mean one group not getting what they want or an ideological struggle for right and wrong. Rather, these are struggles that have endured over time and leave an indelible impact on social life such as racism, sexism, or homophobia. These struggles, with very real consequences, mainly lurk in the shadows without full awareness by all actors. Furthermore, individuals experience these struggles are multiple, diverse, and interconnected ways that defy binary labels such as powerful and oppressed. Local practice is then contentious because conflicting views of history presuppose differing possibilities about the future. Which possibilities are ultimately made possible have significant implications for future local practice.

The literature reviewed in this section will examine how the construct of history in person is used to understand the process of teacher identity development. First, I will identify the specific activity or “contentious local practice” that is under investigation. Then I will identify the enduring struggles, if any, that the authors foreground in their study of local practice. Finally, I will discuss what this collection of studies means for how history is made in and by (Holland & Lave, 2001) teachers in contentious local practice.

The preparation of teachers for urban contexts is a contentious local practice (Brown 2007; Cho, 2014; Gere, Buehler, Dallavis, & Haviland, 2009; Skerrett, 2008). Here, history in person primarily focuses on a single social category of pre-service teachers. Several authors argue that explicit attention to race should be a prominent feature in the preparation for urban schools due to the historical precedent of racial inequality and segregation in urban schooling (Brown, 2007; Cho, 2014; Gere et al., 2009). In these instances, the enduring struggle that the authors attend to is the dominance of Whiteness in schools (Leonardo & Broderick, 2007) and teacher education (Banks, 2015; Cross, 2007; Sleeter, 2012).

Specifically, Brown (2007) explores the place of Whiteness as privilege in pre-service teachers' constructions of identity. She embeds critical theoretical, ethnographic, and autobiographical texts that focused on race and identity construction into the design of coursework. She exposed students to readings that critically examined Whiteness and White privilege as they pertain to identity. She also promoted self-reflective inquiry and exploration of the sociocultural factors contributing to identity formation. She collected data through personal narratives and a questionnaire addressing how their emergent awareness of Whiteness may impact their curricular planning and their interactions with their future students. Similarly, Gere et al. (2009) explored the process of raced consciousness and its impact on teachers' ability to use culturally responsive pedagogy. The argument here is that the cultural mismatch between a prominently White teaching force in urban areas with large populations of people of color necessitates approaches for critical culturally responsive pedagogy. In both of these studies, the pre-service teachers respond in uneven and even contradictory ways. Brown (2007) noted that while a majority of White pre-service teachers began the course with a notable absence of White privilege in their self-constructs, some pre-service teachers demonstrated increased awareness of how privilege informed their historical experiences. They also noted a desire to incorporate this new understanding into their teaching practices. Similarly, Gere and colleagues (2009) found through interviews and observation that pre-service teachers brought raced consciousness to their social positioning in classroom interactions. It also helped them to surface stereotypes that helped to overcome essentialist approaches to culturally responsive pedagogy (Sleeter, 2012). However, in both cases, some White pre-service teachers resisted discussions of race and demonstrated politics of resentment (McCarthy, 1998) in that they used arguments of "reverse racism" to discredit systemic inequality. Similarly, Gere and co-authors (2009) noted how the

process of developing raced consciousness proved disjointed for some students. Progress made in course discussions would be halted by essentialist depictions in conversations with school site colleagues. However, the instructors of the course embraced the messiness and concluded that it helped to emphasize the on-going nature of examining blind spots related to identity and teaching.

Another study focused on race discussions in teacher preparation as contentious local practice as well but with pre-service teachers' religion as the focal social identity (Johnson, 2007). In this particular example, the pre-service teachers in this study identified as Christian. The author uses the term "enduring position" to describe how pre-service teachers continually draw on their religious identity in discussions on race and class. The authors demonstrate how storylines around race are impacted by religious values that influence what pre-service teachers view as good teaching or the role of the teacher. Moreover, participants drew on their knowledge of religion and the teachings of Jesus Christ in order to nullify discussion points that felt uncomfortable. The authors recommend that, since in their view religion is an enduring identity that will carry over from one context to the next, they should take pre-service teachers' religion into account and use it to open up space for critical discussion rather than shutting it down. They provide the example of using the parable from the Bible where Jesus asserts that is difficult for a rich man to enter heaven as a resource for discussing critical views on class inequality.

While the previous studies foregrounded the experiences of pre-service teachers with dominant backgrounds, Cho (2014) uses a focal pre-service teacher whose native language is Cantonese. In this case, the enduring struggle being addressed in the preparation for urban contexts with dominant approaches to language and literacy. The instructor used critical literacy as a framework for critical discussions and reflection. The focal student, Rose, resisted tenets of

critical literacy because she felt that they imposed deficit identities upon her as a non-native English speaker. For instance, she challenged labels such as “slow learner” or “second-class citizen” as they were used to label language minority students. Through narratives in a course reflection journal, Rose noted her multiple identities such as social worker, mother, wife, bilingual prospective teacher, non-native speaker of English, and Cantonese native speaker. Cho (2014) describes Rose as working on the hyphen (Fine, 1998). Since her work draws on these identities, she can interrogate pedagogical methods in ways that interact with her own social positioning providing critical insight into the deficit lenses in teacher education.

Carter’s (2012) study on the other hand did not foreground social identities but rather pre-service teachers’ educational experiences as the history in person that they bring to their preparation for urban schools. In a graduate course on the social foundations of education in New York City, teachers were asked to share a critical educational incident from their schooling experience. At the same time, they were also exposed to texts from authors such as John Dewey, William Ayers, Lisa Delpit, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Audre Lorde. In their critical educational incidents, students drew connections between these readings and their experiences. As a result, students were able to use their stories to locate themselves within or against educational institutions based on the experience of academic success or failure. Moreover, they were able to see how their educational journey interacted with the larger sociocultural and political struggles as they relate to education. These educational incidents also provided models for teaching practices they would like to replicate or avoid in their teaching practices. These authors conclude that autobiographical educational accounts are a means to help teachers draw connections between theoretical readings and their own teacher identity development.



### **Implications for Critical Inclusive Teacher Education**

In this section, the authors investigated teacher preparation for urban contexts as the contentious local practice under investigation. Furthermore, they looked at the enduring struggle of the dominance of Whiteness in education as well as teacher preparation by explicitly addressing race in coursework. While teacher education is certainly a jumping off point for exploration and reflection on history in person as it relates to teacher identity, the focus of the course work was geared toward future activity, namely the pre-service teachers' work in urban schools. Only Gere et al. (2009) investigated teachers in a temporary clinical experience tied to the course. Even in this brief time in schools, students' critical understandings of race and culture were contested and they resorted back to essentialist views of urban students. Holland and Lave (2001; 2009) assert that history in person is mediated through daily activity. Thus, for teachers to develop an ongoing critical reflexivity of their own history in person and its impact on teaching in urban settings, pedagogical approaches should allow students to engage in critical reflection in the daily activity of teaching and learning.

Holland and Lave (2001; 2009) assert that history in person is connected to larger enduring struggles as they are enacted in local practice. In the literature reviewed in this section, the enduring struggle being addressed is the dominance of Whiteness in education and teacher education. In many of the studies the connection between local practice, history in person, and the enduring struggle are evident. For instance, Brown (2007) has White pre-service teachers critically reflect on White privilege as it relates to their own history in person and identity. Therefore, the interrogation of history in person aligns with the enduring struggle at hand within the context of local practice. In Johnson's (2007), study the social identity being investigated is the pre-service teacher's religion. Certainly, the religious views of teachers play a role in the

constellation that comprises their history in person, however the students do not critically evaluate these positions in light of the enduring struggle of the dominance of Whiteness in education. This non-critical stance is evident in the recommendations of the author. The author proposes using pre-service teachers' religious affiliations clandestinely in pedagogy in order to sway their thinking. This is counter to making history in person and its role in identity development explicit for pre-service teachers. It borders on essentializing all people of a particular faith by making assumptions around their views on specific topics simply due to their religious affiliation. Moreover, without explicit critical attention, pre-service teachers are not exposed to ways in which dominant Judeo-Christian values can perpetuate oppression. Thus, for critical inclusive teacher preparation, teacher educators should make the connections between history in person, contentious local practice, and enduring struggles explicit and aligned.

Finally, Holland and Lave (2001) describe history in person as a collection of many social identities that individuals claim and those that are placed upon them. Therefore, the foregrounding of one particular social identity without connecting it to the other parts of one's history in person, limits its potential as a critical pedagogical tool. Only Carter (2012) is able to open up space for the examination of multiple identities when pre-service teachers are asked to examine a critical educational incident. Here, pre-service teachers are able to connect their educational experience to multiple, interlocking identities. Moreover, they are able to directly connect these social identities to the educational experience. This process is more aligned to capture the complex and relational aspects of history in person. Teacher educators should use similar exercises that afford interrogation of these multiple social identities and how they inform individual history in person.

### **Figured Worlds: (Re)Figuring the World of Teaching**

This section will draw on Holland and colleagues' (1998) definition of figured worlds as “a socially and cultural constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts and particular outcomes are valued over other” (p. 52). Figured worlds are abstractions of reality based on individual or collective imaginings. Like identity, they are constantly being (re)fashioned through everyday activities and events. Therefore, they occur as social processes in historical time. Through figured worlds, people make sense of themselves, their behavior, and their capacities for action. The social process of figuring these worlds mediates identity development. Urrieta (2007) describes the four characteristics of figured worlds:

- (1) They are cultural and cultural phenomenon that actors enter into and develop through the work of participants.
- (2) Actors draw meaning from figured worlds in order direct their activities.
- (3) They are socially organized and reproduced by actors based on their relational positions.
- (4) Actors draw an individual sense of self by fulfilling familiar social types within figured worlds.

Within figured worlds, artifacts as mediators of identities and action (Holland et al., 1998; Urietta, 2007). Artifacts can be conceptual or material such as the idea of inclusion or an inclusive curriculum guide. As the above definition states, there is a hierarchy of value placed on various identities and actions within figured worlds. This is because figured worlds exist within larger, institutionalized structures of power. Through improvisation, actors can change artifacts through activity. Therefore, artifacts can be tools for liberation in that they create new

possibilities within figured worlds. However, the potential for new possibilities is continually afforded or constrained by the actors' relations to power.

In this section, I will review the literature on figured worlds. Particularly, I explore how novice teachers (within 1-3 years of teaching) figured worlds of (a) education, (b) urban education, and (c) special education. I will discuss how they fashion their identities through figured worlds and also ways in which they use artifacts to alter their particular worlds in light of their relation to power structures.

One way that teachers' figure the world of teaching is by drawing on their own educational experiences. Through his analysis of the life narratives of mathematics teachers, Williams (2011) found two prominent features in how the participants figured the world of teaching and also how they constructed their role within it. The first prominent feature is significance of a model or an anti-model teachers. The participants positioned or authored themselves as specific types of teachers in relation to these symbolic representations of what it means to act as a teacher. The second feature was the teachers' own identity as a learner of math. The participants figured their role based on their own needs as a student. For instance, one teacher used repetitious inner speech in order to understand complex math concepts. Therefore, this is something she felt was significant for her to teach to her own students. It is important to note that teachers in this study drew on their educational histories as a cultural resource to fashion their figured world of teaching. Importantly, they purposely chose to resist certain teaching behaviors or activities if they had been ineffective or even harmful to them as a learner. This is demonstrative of ways teachers (re)author their teacher identity and, in turn, (re)fashion the figured world of teaching.

While the past can serve as a tool for figuring the world of teaching, present day reform and mandates call teachers to challenge teachers to modify their figured world of teaching. Recently, high stakes reform and accountability efforts have pushed teachers to (re)configured their figured worlds and teacher identity. For instance, Brown, Bay-Borelli, and Scott (2015) conducted a case study of 20 teachers in their first two years of teaching in a school undergoing high stakes reform. In this instance teachers were required to use a standardized “Aligned Curriculum” across the district. Over time, the Aligned Curriculum became the most significant force mediating their teacher identity. They began to see their role as deliverers of standardized sets of knowledge and skills. At the same time, Sloan (2006) used school-life narratives, images, and metaphors to understand how teachers figured the world of school vis-à-vis accountability curriculum policies. In comparing three teachers with varied teaching experience, they found that teachers responded to accountability policies in unpredictable and multifaceted ways. Teachers with extensive expertise around curriculum and pedagogy had a less malleable figured world of teaching than less experienced teachers. As a result, they demonstrated more resistance in the face of accountability policies. Therefore, the authors claim that accountability policy makers cannot assume that all teachers will enact policy in the same way.

Certainly, pre-service teachers also face challenges to their figured world of teaching when they encounter new pedagogical methods in coursework. For instance, Ma and Singer-Gabella (2011) looked how “reform pedagogy” in math shaped pre-service teachers figured world of mathematics instruction. This study describes “reform pedagogy” as an approach to math that poses problems that are accessible to various student ability levels. Students are asked to problem-solve through reasoning instead of mechanically reproducing a memorized set of steps like in more traditional forms of math instruction. Rather than providing direct instruction,

the teacher in this type of instruction is in the background orchestrating the discussion around different student led strategies highlighting student methods that promote efficiency, accuracy, and flexibility. Pre-service teachers experienced conflict between their preconceived notions about math instruction that looked more like traditional approaches. The instructors used techniques where pre-service teachers role-played as students in a math class. Taking on a learner identity helped teachers to examine their own identity towards math as a learner and its impact on their teaching. This is similar to the findings presented in Williams (2011) where the learner identity of the pre-service teacher played a significant role in how they figured their role as teacher.

### **Urban Education**

Other studies specifically look at the urban context and how it impacts how teachers figure the world of urban education (Barnatt, Terrell, D'Souza, Jong, Cochran-Smith, Viesca, Gleeson, McQuillan, & Shakman, 2016; Downey, 2015). Barnatt and colleagues (2016) look at how the process of (re)figuring urban education impacts teacher career trajectory in a longitudinal study. They are interested in addressing low levels of teacher retention in urban schools. They found that teachers' ability to reconfigure their identity within their figured world was the single most important factor in staying in the field of education. The teacher who had tutoring experience in an urban school prior to getting her teaching job remained in her position beyond five years. Another teacher who expressed that she just felt draw to work in urban schools but had no experience eventually struggled to modify her expectations. Ultimately, she left the classroom due to these challenges. The authors call the disconnect between expectations for figured worlds and reality as a feeling of disequilibrium. They recommend that teacher preparation programs prepare teachers for this inevitable disequilibrium and the continuous

process of reconstructing their figured worlds and their identities will lead to increased teacher retention in urban settings.

Downey (2015) explores how teachers in an urban school use student stories as a way to signal their position in figured worlds to others. This study used participant observation of teachers during a Comprehensive Support Process hearing, exchanges between teachers before and after the meeting, as well as informal staff room conversations. In sum, the researchers found that the teachers used student stories as narrative resources to solve problems in their work. They also used these stories to construct and contest aspects of their teacher identity. For instance, in stories deemed problematic, they would minimize their presence or omit it entirely as to provide distance between themselves and what they consider problematic behavior. In contrast, the teacher narrators gave themselves a more prominent role in student success stories as to portray themselves as a good teacher. Furthermore, findings demonstrate that teachers used student stories to counter cultural, institution, and local narratives that frame the school and students as “failing.” This suggests that teacher can play an active role in the (re)figuring of urban schools and their own identities as teachers within those schools through counterstories.

### **Special Education**

Other literature added nuance to the understanding of teacher identity by exploring the figured world of special education. While special education teachers may want to implement inclusive practices, they confront challenges because inclusion often runs counter to traditional models of special education. For example, Narian (2010) found that her focal teacher, Stephanie, felt committed to inclusive practices but had trouble reconciling them with her job responsibilities. Her co-teacher saw her as only capable of teaching the students with special education labels as opposed to all students in the classroom. Thus, her general education co-

teacher placed limits on her ability to teach inclusively. In another example, Thorius (2015) noted that special education teachers experienced exclusion from the general education realm in their schools. They had less access to materials and other resources as well as little opportunity to interact with their general education colleagues. In conclusion, they were limited to special education spaces making inclusion nearly impossible to realize. In each of these examples, the way that the school community figured special education and the particular history of special education in that school placed constraints on special educators' ability to implement inclusion.

However, both researchers found opportunities to challenge traditional conceptions of special education. Stephanie, the focal teacher in Narian's (2010) study, sought out professional development opportunities around the general education curriculum. Armed with this new expertise, she was able to use her new found knowledge to generate new conversations around learning, ability, and community to teach more inclusively in the general education classroom because she was then allowed to teach a larger number of students in the classroom and integrate special education students into general education instruction. Through professional development on inclusive practices, the participants in Thorius (2015) began to shift their identity by (re) figuring the world of special education. While many special educators resisted critiques of special education practice in order to uphold the adequacy of special education delivery, a stand out moment was when one educator critiqued an erroneous goal she wrote for a student in the beginning of year without extensive knowledge of the students' abilities. Particularly, when special educators were asked to look at the structural limitations of their school, they were more apt to examine their own professional procedures. Thorius (2015) projects that this practice could expand special education teachers figured world of special education beyond dominant tropes of pathologization and remediation.



## **Implications for Critical Inclusive Teacher Education**

Since the actors within figured worlds (re)configure them through daily activity, figured worlds themselves are actually social processes in historical time (Holland et al., 1998). In the literature in this section, there are examples of how teachers can use daily activity to (re)shape the figured world of teaching. Sloan (2016) noted that teachers with extensive expertise around the curriculum had the ability to push back against accountability reforms. Downey (2015) found evidence of teacher counterstories that repositioned themselves and students in order to contest cultural historical representations of urban schools as failing. Narian (2010) and Thorius (2015) found that through professional development, special education teachers were able to re(shape) the figured world of special education. In one case (Narian, 2010), by gaining knowledge of the general education curriculum provided access into general education spheres of influence to implement inclusive practices. In the other (Thorius, 2015) teachers evaluated their own special education practice from an institutional constraints approach so that special educators felt less vulnerable with critiquing their own practice. Inclusive education needs to have a transformative agenda because it challenges the status quo (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). These findings point towards teachers' ability to push back against dominant narratives in school should be studied further and influence the design of critical inclusive teacher preparation.

Yet, research used to develop these procedures needs to account for the relational positions of the actors involved in figuring worlds. Indeed, figured worlds should be examined in light of the larger, institutional power structures in which they occur (Holland, et al., 1998). Historically, teachers as a group are often blamed for urban educational inequity (Farber & Azar, 1999; Milner, 2008). This over simplified critique obscures the systemic, institutional, and bureaucratic constraints teachers face that also contribute to uneven levels of educational equity

and attainment in urban settings. Furthermore, special education teachers can face particular marginalization such as limited access to resources, materials, and general education knowledge and settings (citation in Thorius, 2015). Therefore, the actions of resistance by educators to (re)fashion figured worlds must be couched a sociocultural understanding of their positional limitations. Ma and Singer-Gabella (2011) and Barnett et al. (2016) stress the importance of pre-service teachers understanding that there will be mismatch between their expectations and the reality of their school settings. The main goal is then for teachers to navigate discrepancies in expectations. However, critical inclusive education calls for a transformative agenda (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007) in education and teachers who can actively dismantle oppressive structures related to difference and exclusion (Narian, 2014). When Narian (2010) and Thorius (2015) situated their analysis with a sociocultural frame, they were able to deduce the structural constraints that ultimately limited teachers' figured worlds. The focal teacher in Narian (2010) sought to master the general education curriculum rather than altering it to make it more flexible for a wider variety of student needs. She still saw collaboration with her co-teacher as the joining of two separate professional knowledge strands rather than the joint provision of supports. Even with professional development focused on structural critique, Thorius (2015) still found that pathologization and remediation of students with disabilities reigned as the dominant assumption amongst special education teachers. Simply navigating the disconnect between critical inclusive programs and traditional schools will not suffice to bring transformation change. Rather, critical inclusive teacher preparation will need to provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to critically reflect on the historical and constructions of disability and disability related oppressions as well as how they operate in schools (Thorius, 2015).

### **Communities of Practice: (Re)mediating Regimes of Competence**

Communities of practice help to understand the social nature of learning as used in anthropology (Wenger, 1998). Drawing on social learning theory, Wenger (1998) understands people as social beings in a social world. In this theory, learning does not occur in the head or outside of it but rather in the relationship between the person and the world. Communities of practice can be formal, such as a professional development group, but it can also be informal like a novice teacher seeking advice from a seasoned educator in the faculty break room.

Participants in communities of practice organize their participation in social life by reifying the shared experiences of the community (Wenger, 1998). Through participation in social life, artifacts such as tools, concepts, or stories are produced. The participation gives the artifacts meaning, while the artifacts give participation some permanence. Through the process of participation, reification, and artifact construction, the community of practice develops a “regime of competence.” A regime of competence is a set of norms that signal membership in a community of practice. These norms include understanding the community’s values and rules for participation in the community.

Communities of practice mediate how participants constitute their identity as a learner and a knower (Wenger, 1998). How and why they learn is negotiated with the regime of competence. Newcomers into a community of practice may observe conflict between their own experience the regime of competence. The newcomer can either (re)align their learning and strive towards competence or they can bring new experience into the community dynamic. This has the potential to alter the regime of competence if accepted by the rest of the community. It is important to understand that who and what is considered competent is connected to larger power

structures. Indeed, what is considered competent in one community may not be recognized as competent in another.

In this section I will explore literature that draws on social learning theory in communities of practice amongst pre-service and novice teachers. The discussion will be broken into two parts. The first will look at communities of practice within teacher preparation and the second will look at beginning teachers (one to three years of teaching) participating in communities of practice in their school setting. When possible, I will identify the regime of competence within the groups and how actors develop identities by driving towards achieving competence and/or altering the regime of competence with new experience.

### **Communities of Practice in Teacher Preparation**

Understanding identity in relation to communities of practice is important because it accounts for the multiple identities and experiences humans bring to the social practice of learning (Wenger, 1998). Student teaching brings together two distinct sociocultural worlds; that of the teacher preparation and the fieldwork site. These two different spheres may have different regimes of competence that pre-service teachers need to navigate. Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) theorize this work as boundary crossing. Since boundaries are locations of tension and ambiguity, boundary crossers such as student teachers and their supervisors, can initiate the re-mediation of practices. In their analysis, a tenure line professor served as a site supervisor and boundary crosser between the university and the school site. The professor introduced explicit conversation around inclusive education and ability differences. These conversations helped to translate artifacts across communities. In other words, they helped to clarify connections and dichotomies between the inclusive messages in the teacher preparation program and the practices of the school. In doing so, the explicit analysis of the variation between regimes of competence

in both sites opened up space for re-mediation of those regimes and, ultimately, the ways that resources are distributed across student difference.

Pre-service teachers' positioning within the community of practice plays a role in their ability to alter the regime of competence. In one study (Correa, Martinez-Arbelaiz, Asuncion, & Guiterrez, 2014), student teachers expressed feeling on the periphery of the community of practice. They felt incapacitated in their ability to make decisions, present new ideas, and offer suggestions. This created resentment between themselves and the school site community and limited opportunities for mutual re-mediation. Skerrett and Williamson (2015) argue that in order for pre-service teachers to be seen as integral members of the school community, they need to have legitimate participation. Moreover, they argue that this is of particular importance for teachers with commitments to social justice because they want to transform the school context to make it more socially just. Correa and colleagues (2014) used a critical incidents approach to help engage the teachers in their community of practice. In this approach, student teachers share challenging moments they encountered in their teaching site. This helped the community of learners articulate and (re)visé the meaning of their present and future role in schools. This helped teachers to transition from an identity of student to that of teacher. In doing so, they gained the artifacts necessary to move from the periphery to the center of the community of practice. The authors describe the use of critical incidents as the development of a critical imagination. This then opens up space to critique the regime of competence at their school and offer ideas on how it can be (re)formed for increased equity.

Since student teachers are working on the boundaries between university and school site, it is important to understand how the two communities of practice mutually constitute the development of teacher identity (Wenger, 1998). Pre-service teachers armed with experience

around inclusive practices are susceptible to the influence of the regime of competence within their school sites. In one study (Correa et al., 2014), teachers adopted the attributes of the model teacher in the community of practice at their school site. For instance, they tried to suppress signs of affection for students because they were taught that good teachers rarely convey emotion. In another example (Young, 2011), the institutional structure of schools influenced the professional aspirations of pre-service teachers in a combined general and special education credential program. The teachers strongly wanted the autonomy of their own classroom, which collaboration did not allow for. Therefore, their preferences and career aspirations as either a general or special educators reified traditional ideological and physical separation between general and special education. In the first example (Correa, et al., 2014), the supervising professor was able to counter the regime of competence in the school site that modeled minimal teacher emotion by advocating for a depiction of competence through dialogue that promoted the benefits of a more humanized school community. In the second example (Young, 2011), the combined credential program was unable to realign pre-service teacher learning through a community of practice that promoted inclusion. Indeed, some pre-service teachers expressed a desire to become a special educator but the combined credential program did little to realign pre-service teachers' identity as inclusive educators. Rather, sociocultural constructions around disability proved to be a stronger force in their imaginings of their role within future communities of practice.

Social learning in communities of practice in teacher preparation also take place in coursework within the university. Cumming-Potvin (2013) deliberately developed a literacy course with the express purpose of expanding notions of literacy pedagogy to consider complex and multiliterate worlds. The social interaction in the course provided an informal space for

students to reflect on their definitions of literacy and critique their own assumptions and biases from a sociocultural perspective. In this course, pre-service teachers were given the task to engage in shared reading experiences with their own children. The purpose of this was to bridge connections between home and school literacies. The pre-service teachers also engaged in online discussion throughout the course. This allowed teachers to watch their ideas around literacy broaden over time. Importantly, the melding of sociocultural critique into literacy discussions was modeled and promoted by the course instructor. The authors conclude that this indicates the powerful impact of academic discourse on pre-service teachers. In sum, the course perspectives and activities provided space for teachers to (re)align their learning and generate a regime of competence that promoted a broader conception of literacy.

### **Communities of Practice in Schools**

Communities of practice can take many forms with varying levels of formality (Wenger, 1998). In addition, people can belong to multiple communities of practice simultaneously. In the literature of communities of practice in schools for novice teachers focuses on professional development settings. However, several researchers noted how social learning occurs beyond the formal context of professional development and influences its impact. Craig (2013) used narrative inquiry to study the implementation of professional development on accountability, and standardization and its impact on teacher learning communities and the role they played on beginning teacher identity development. In implementing this professional development program, the administration acted under the assumption that teachers were not currently using effective practices. As a result, the administration appeared to delegitimize existing teacher wisdom. Teachers responded by symbolically enacting the new “rules” while maintaining their own practices. In his analysis, Craig (2013) noted that communities of practice already existed.

Teachers learned by sharing ideas, strategies and materials amongst each other. However, since the administration did not sanction these learning communities, membership was premised on trustworthiness. The focal novice teacher in this study, Anna, struggled to be included in these communities. She knew they had knowledge to offer her but she was unable to access it. Even though teachers in this school did not alter their regime of competence based on the accountability and standardization, they still had to pay lip service to it. This created a distrustful atmosphere within the community of practice, which precluded novice teachers from tapping into existing teacher knowledge.

Morrel (2003) took a different approach when designing professional development. In this example, professional development served as a situated activity where teachers worked together to solve real problems related to critical practice. This is called legitimate peripheral participation (Wegner, 1998). In other words, the participation is useful for practice but not the core practice itself. The benefit of this type of organization for social learning is that teachers felt that they could humble their practice and ask naïve questions without seeming inadequate. The authors note that this was particularly salient in this urban school where teachers had to contest deficit images of teachers but constantly promoting a sense of professional aptitude. The authors conclude that having professional learning spaces for legitimate peripheral participation, can open up space for (re)framing the regime of competence in urban communities of practice.

Participation in research can be another space for new teacher social learning. D'Souza (2014) conducted a case study with three teachers in a New England urban district. During the research process, teachers routinely reflected on the themes from their teacher preparation program (student learning, social justice, and inquiry into practice) and related them to their daily practice. The ensuing discussion helped them to mediate tensions between program themes and



the regime of competence in the school community. They also served located opportunities for transformation. Thus, the research process served as a link between their teacher preparation and their school context and a learning community for new teachers.

### **Implications for Critical Inclusive Teacher Education**

If one of the goals of critical inclusive teacher education is to develop teachers to act as change agents in schools, it must attend to the ways in which teachers learn in communities of practice. This will require designing opportunities for participation, reification, and artifact translation and production across the boundaries between teacher preparation programs and school sites (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). Since critical inclusive education requires a transformative agenda (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007), the goal will be (re)mediation of the regime of competency in communities of practice. Yet, with the exception of one (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013), the literature reviewed in this section on communities of practice in teacher preparation (e.g., Young, 2011 Cumming-Potvin, 2013; Morrel, 2003) focused on the (re)mediation of pre-service teacher identity without engaging the school site community in a meaningful way for dialogical discussion and transformation. Thus, new teachers will face an uphill battle of trying to alter the regime of competence already well established in schools. This includes understanding the ways that power operates in schools and how new teachers as newcomers (Wegner, 1998) can face marginalization and few pathways towards power other than striving for the version of competence sanctioned by the community of practice. Indeed, making pre-service teachers aware of the social processes for learning in schools through explicit engagement in discourse and reflection certainly is a significant first step. However, teacher preparation programs need to design pathways for ongoing (re)mediation with other boundary crossers such as professors and site supervisors. One way to accomplish this is through the

establishment professional learning schools where university partners have a long-standing and established role within the school site (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013).

Professional development for Correa et al. (2014) and D'Souza (2015) demonstrate the importance of situated learning for new teachers. These include learning communities where teachers feel safe to share challenges and to contest dominant ideologies in their school sites. D'Souza (2015) shows the benefits of engaging in research by designing interview protocols that connect themes of the teacher preparation program to teachers' daily practice. These types of supports that extend into the first years of teaching also help to relieve the burden of exclusively tasking new teachers with transformation for critical inclusion.

### **Implications for this Study**

This literature review used my conceptual framework (Figure 1) to identify and explore what is known about urban special education teacher identity development through three theoretical tools: (a) history in person, (b) figured worlds, and (c) communities of practice. In this section I will summarize the information gleaned from this literature review based on the implications for critical inclusive teacher preparation and how it will impact the present study.

#### **History in Person**

The study of history in person must start with contentious local practice because it is through daily activity that history in person is enacted and (re)made (Holland et al., 1998). While the literature does offer information within the daily practice of preparing teachers for urban settings (Brown, 2007; Cho, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Carter, 2012), there is a gap in the literature addressing the contentious local practice of new teacher induction into urban educational settings. This study will explore beginning special educators as they are engaged in the

contentious local practice of teaching in urban schools. This will provide information on how enduring struggles at the school level mediate teachers' personal histories through local practice.

Moreover, in the extant literature, a specific social identity (e.g. race, religion) typically subsumes the entire history in person of an individual. We know that history in person entails the interaction of a wide variety of social identities (Holland et al., 1998), and though some may be more salient than others, it is important to understand how this constellation of identities is brought to bear in local practice. Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature of conceptualizing specific approaches to teacher education, such as critical inclusive teacher preparation, as part of teachers' personal history. This study will use a broader approach to critical reflection on history in person similar to the work of Carter (2012). Participants will reflect on their teacher preparation in order to make connections to daily practice. However, it will also leave space for connecting their various social identities to practice.

### **Figured Worlds**

Since people come to understand their roles through figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998; Urrieta, 2007), it is important to investigate how urban special education teachers figure their worlds of teaching, urban education, and special education. Moreover, this investigation should connect to larger historical and cultural context and power structures. While the literature documents the mismatch that many beginning teachers, especially urban teachers, face between their expectations and the reality of teaching (e.g., Ma & Singer-Gabella, 2011; Barnett, et al., 2016), there is a gap in the literature around how teachers come to understand the oppressive structures within historical constructions of figured worlds. Furthermore, the problem space of this literature focuses on teacher retention and attrition in urban schools. In the present study, the problem space is more than a mismatch between teacher preparation and practice. It is the lack of

possibility for teachers to resist dominant ideologies and transform schools into more inclusive and equitable spaces. Participants will be asked to trouble the figured world of urban special education, as it is constituted in their schools. Indeed, even teachers who take steps to enact inclusion often end up reifying elements of structural inequity (Narian, 2010; Thorius, 2015). Therefore, this study will ask teachers to reflect on their positioning within schools and how this affords or constrains their ability to act as change agents for inclusion.

### **Communities of Practice**

Communities of practice develop regimes of competence in order to set the norms, values, and rules for a community (Wenger, 1998). However, regimes of competence vary from community to community and power structures determine what counts as competence. Therefore, it is important to understand how teachers come to understand regimes of competence in their practice, how they organize their learning to appear competent, and how they disrupt constructs of competence in ways that can (re)structure learning within a community. The literature shows implications for communities of practice in teacher preparation (e.g., Correa et al., 2013; Scarred & Williamson, 2015; Young, 2011) and for beginning teachers in practice (e.g., Craig, 2013; Morrel, 2003). However, there is less known about communities of practice that connect ways of learning from teacher preparation into practice. Drawing on a critical incidents approach to organizing learning (Correa et al., 2014) and using research as a bridge for new teachers between teacher preparation and practice (D'Souza, 2015), this study will address this gap in the literature by (a) having participants reflect on their teacher preparation experience and (b) engaging in a community of practice through reflexive video analysis. In doing so, we will explore how teachers reify the regime of competence and how they may resist and offer opportunities for (re)mediation of school-wide approaches to special education.

The present study will address these gaps in the literature and also build on promising research strands. The unique contribution of this study will be incorporating the three theoretical tools (history in person, figured worlds, communities of practice) from my conceptual framework with a particular focus on urban special education identity development. By drawing on sociocultural approaches, this study will contribute new understandings on teacher identity development as a social process entrenched in existing power structures that serve to oppress students with disabilities in urban schools. Ultimately, the results of this study will have implications for the development and implementation of critical inclusive teacher preparation for urban settings.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

I argue that schools are sites of social reproduction in which systemic inequity is perpetuated by privileging normalcy and its corollary, anthologizing difference. In the American context, this results in students of color, non-native English speakers, and students from lower socioeconomic statuses being overrepresented in segregated special education settings (Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009; Erevelles, 2000; Ferri & Connor, 2006). Because these processes are insidious, they are rarely evident to the students, teachers, and administrators who work in schools. This project sought to reveal how urban special education teachers understand themselves as agents for critical inclusion as well as the way their sociocultural context mediates this understanding. Charmaz (2008) describes qualitative social justice research as the combination of “critical inquiry and grounded theory in novel and productive ways” (p. 232). Due to my commitment to expose the social processes that lead to systemic inequity in urban school systems, I selected critical ethnographic methods as a methodological approach to answer my research questions.

Critical ethnography assumes an ethical responsibility to uncover systemic processes of injustice within institutional contexts for the purposes of promoting equity (Madison, 2012). It accomplishes this by making the implicit undercurrents of power and privilege explicit and vulnerable to critical reflection. Critical ethnography challenges traditional power dynamics not only within institutional contexts but also within the process of research itself. Erickson (2006b) writes that most often anthropologists engage in research that investigates individuals with less power in a process termed “studying down.” “Studying up” on the other hand, examines at individuals who hold power and privilege in society. However, the risk in studying up or down is ignoring the power differential with the relationships between researcher and informant. This

power differential comes from the fact that the researcher comes from the ‘hallowed halls’ of the academy often with a high-ranking degree, or in my case, in pursuit of such degree. The researcher also claims ‘ownership’ of specialized knowledge sanctioned by academic literature and discourse. Without engaging participants in the research process, there is a “danger” in leaving out the “weight of history and of immediate material circumstances; the prestructured constraints that people face when they are actually working in the world” (Erickson, 2006b, p. 243). While, the researcher can bring academic knowledge as well as research and analytic skills, participants themselves bring wisdom earned through the process of engagement in daily activity. In approaching research activities, the researcher needs to honor this wisdom by coming to this work with the assumption that the participants have valuable information to share that can inform, contest, and even disprove academic knowledge. Furthermore, the ultimate power to represent the participants in the research dissemination process belongs to the researcher. Therefore, researchers have the obligation to provide checkpoints for their participants to inform the data analysis and representation process.

For these reasons, Erickson proposes “studying side by side,” or engaging the participants in aspects of the research itself. This approach does not negate power relations between researchers and their participants entirely but rather makes them explicit (Annamma, 2014). In this study, I took a side-by-side approach through reciprocal dialogue rather than traditional interview techniques with participants so that we could challenge each other in the process of co-constructing knowledge. Furthermore, the participants had an ongoing influence in the data analysis. This method rejected static and essentialist depictions of “The Other” in traditional ethnographic approaches by creating space for my participants to share how they make sense of and negotiate the institutional constraints under which they operate on a daily basis (Agar, 1996).

Thus, my project endeavored to examine how critical theory is made incarnate in the lived world. In this chapter, I will provide the details about my research methods while building connections to my theoretical framework from Chapter 1.

### **Project Overview**

This study explored the social processes through which graduates of an inclusive education program (re)constituted their identity within the power dynamics of their communities of practice. School contexts are steeped in dominant ideologies of normalcy that collude to create intersecting systems of oppression in special education (Artiles, 2013; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). I drew on teacher's preparation experience and personal histories to examine ways in which these teachers reify dominant ideologies but also how they demonstrated resistance given the institutional constraints that they face. Using critical ethnographic methods (Madison, 2012), I co-constructed with teachers a critical analysis of institutional inequity and their connection to intersectional oppression within their schools and their own teaching practices. Together, we explored the naturalized and taken-for-granted social processes that occur in their daily practice. Through this dialectic process, we strove to identify locations for special education teacher resistance that challenge the status quo, promote inclusivity and, produce better outcomes for students with disabilities in urban schools.

### **Research Procedures**

Using critical ethnographic methods, four novice special educators worked with me to investigate the social processes through which the special educators (re)constituted their identity given the affordances and constraints of their urban community of practice. By (re)constitute, I mean how participants develop and shift their teacher identity over time as it is mediated through contentious local practice (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain, 1998). Prior to beginning the

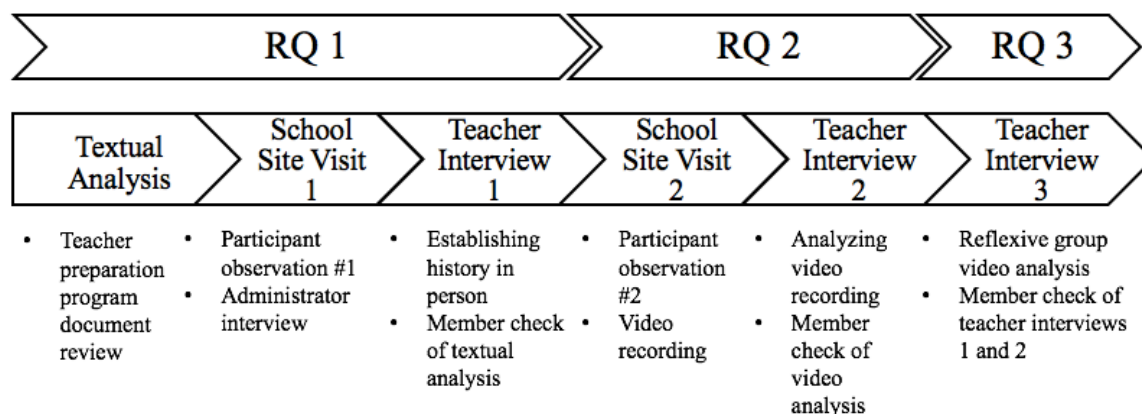


research process, I created three general research questions based on my conceptual framework and literature review. In an effort to work side-by-side, I presented these questions to my participants and revised them based on their feedback. Together we sought to answer three research questions:

How do special education teachers in urban school settings:

- 1) use their knowledge from (a) their preparation program and (b) their personal histories to understand and critically analyze exclusion in relation to their teacher identity?
- 2) engage in present activity through the mutual constitution of the (norms, values, and rules) of the community of practice and their teacher identity?
- 3) use dominant versus critical conceptions of special education to figure the world of special education, their role within it, and its impact on their teacher identity?

In the following section, I lay out the research procedures (Figure 2) and the data collection timeline (Table 2) used to address each research question.



*Figure 2.* Research procedures. This figure explains the steps involved in the research process.

Table 2

*Data Collection Timeline*

<u>Participant</u>	<u>TA</u>	<u>SSV 1</u>	<u>TI 1</u>	<u>AI</u>	<u>SSV 2</u>	<u>TI 2</u>	<u>TI 3</u>
Sarah	Sept 16	Oct 16	Oct 16	Oct 16	Nov 16	Nov 16	Feb 17
Denise	Sept 16	Oct 16	Oct 16	Nov 16	Nov 16	Dec 16	Feb 17
Anna	Sept 16	Dec 16	Dec 16	Dec 16	Jan 17	Feb 17	Feb 17
Natalie	Sept 16	Jan 17	Jan 17	Jan 17	Feb 17	Feb 17	Feb 17

*Note.* 16= 2016, 17=2017, AI= Administrator Interview, TA=Textual Analysis, TI 1=Teacher Interview 1, TI 2=Teacher Interview 2, TI 3=Teacher Interview 3, SSV 1=School Site Visit 1, SSV 2= School Site Visit 2.

**Research Question 1.** Research question 1 primarily drew on the first in a series of three phenomenological interviews (Seidman, 2006a). In September, I conducted a textual analysis (Charmaz, 2006) of selected artifacts from the participants' teacher preparation institution. Specifically, I targeted documents meant to promote an inclusive or social justice stance. While a secondary data source, the textual analysis guided the construction of my interview guide for the first interview that took place in either October, December, or January depending on the participant. The goal of the interview was to how teachers appropriate the messages of the teacher preparation program in order to construct their teacher identity in their practice. Moreover, this interview illuminated the ways in which the participants' person histories color their interpretation of these artifacts and their application to the on-going construction of their teaching identity.

**Research Question 2.** The second interview in the phenomenological interview series (Seidman, 2006a) took place between in November, December, and February. This interview served as the primary data source for research question 2. Building on the first interview, the

participants and I connected past experiences to their present activity in their community of practice. We accomplished this by drawing on two secondary data sources. Firstly, I conducted a single one-hour semi-structured interview with an administrator at each school site. The purpose of this interview was to establish the “regime of practice” (Wenger, 1998) or rules, norms, and values of the community practice as they are imposed, messaged, and evaluated by the participants’ supervisors. During the second interview, I referred to this interview explicitly so that the teachers can confirm, disconfirm or add to the understandings drawn from the administrator interview. I also conducted two one-hour observations of the participants in their classrooms. The purpose of participant observation #1 prior to the first interview was to get acquainted with the teachers’ communities of practice in order to flesh out my first interview plan. For instance, the observation provided information around the teachers’ teaching roles and responsibilities, teaching load, and classroom resources. Participant observation #2 occurred after the first interview and served to compliment the video observation (see Research Question 3) by providing fieldnotes to supplement and aid my video analysis of the same lesson. Using the data collected from the administrator interview, participant observations, and the video analysis, I created an interview plan for the second interview. Furthermore, I asked participants to review the video observation prior to the second interview. The goal of this interview was to situate the participant’s experience, as exemplified by the video observation, within the power structure of the community of practice. We discussed the power structures that exist in their schools that oppress students with disabilities and how they, as teachers situated in their institutional context, reify these structures or push to dismantle them.

**Research Question 3.** I addressed the third research question through the third and final interview in the series that took place in February. Unlike the first two interviews, this interview

took place in the form of a group reflexive video analysis (Tochan, 2007). Prior to the meeting, all four participants were asked to curate two clips from the video observation used during the second interview. I asked them to select two clips from their own practice. One clip exemplified resistance and the other represented reification of structural oppression to them. All four participants gathered for the group reflexive video analysis. I will discuss this in greater detail in the methodological tools section of this chapter. The participants served as discussion leaders as they shared their video clips and dialogued with the other participants drawing connections and making distinctions between experiences. The purpose of this culminating activity was to critically situate their practices within the larger context of their teacher preparation and their communities of practice. Through this critical analysis, we troubled our figured worlds of urban education and special education and our understandings of their role within it. We will then discuss how these new understandings may (re)form their teacher identity.

### **Participant Selection**

Individuals experience enduring struggles in multiple and interlocking ways. Therefore, it is naïve to conceive of individuals in binary categories such as oppressor and victim (Holland et al., 1998). Lorde (1984) writes, “Revolutionary change is not merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us, and which knows only the oppressors’ tactics, the oppressors’ relationships” (p. 123). Thus, transformation, in schools and elsewhere, involves all actors seeking greater understanding and acknowledgement of how they are complicit to some extent in perpetuating systemic oppression as well as actively resisting it. Teachers stand at intersection of being oppressed and being the oppressor. On one hand, they must operate under the institutional constraints and affordances based on positioning within schools (Milner, 2008; Farber & Azar, 1999). At the same time, they

enjoy a privileged position over students as leaders of their classrooms. Teachers set the boundaries for engagement, academic success, and appropriate behavior. Raising teachers' awareness around their role in perpetuating power structures in their school functions as that "piece of the oppressor" (p. 123). Connecting these understandings to their teaching can help them to become more socially conscious and inclusive educators.

Table 3

*Teacher Participants*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>	<u>Site</u>	<u>Setting</u>
Sarah	Female	African-American	Smithville South Middle School (public)	Self-contained classroom (students with EBD)
Denise	Female	White	Haverford Elementary School (public)	Self-contained classroom (cross categorical)
Anna	Female	White	Summit Institute-Brightside (charter)	Resource room (mostly pull out)
Natalie	Female	White	Southside High School (public)	Resource room (mostly push in)

*Note.* EBD = Emotional/Behavioral Disorder

Four study participants (see Table 3) were selected based on the following criteria: (a) graduates of the University of the Prairie Center City (UPCC) Special Education Master's Program, (b) beginning teachers less than three years post-graduation, and (c) special education teachers in an urban district. I selected UPCC's Special Education Master's program because it is framed by a sociocultural perspective that considers contextual variables such as race, gender,

class, and culture and their intersections in relation to the social construction of disability (“Master of Arts in Special Education,” 2016). Master’s students are exposed to sociocultural framings of disability and urban schools in several education experiences. For instance, it is an essential focus of several required courses. The required practicum course involves a weekly collaborative problem solving activity. Here the students are asked to bring problems from their experience that addresses the intersection of disability, race, and class as well as the implications for the specific learning contexts including community, district, school, and classroom (Mills, personal communication, May 30, 2016). Students write and revise a teaching philosophy statement based on these critical conversations, which recalls some of the literature around critical moment reflections in teacher preparation (Z. Mills, personal communication, May 30, 2016). Another opportunity for using sociocultural perspective is the *Collaborating with Families and Other Professionals* course. A learning objective of this course is to build a reflective process for how one’s own philosophical beliefs and how they impact collaboration with families of color (Z. Mills, personal communication, May 30, 2016). Finally, the *Action Research for Practitioners* course asks students to use action research processes for identifying educational inequity with the goal of promoting social justice (Z. Mills, personal communication, May 30, 2016). Students must connect the conclusions from this work to their own teaching practice in order to promote equity. Furthermore, students at UPCC read selections of texts with authors such as David Connor, Colin Ong-Dean, and Linda Ware who take critical perspectives on disability (Z. Mills, personal communication, May 30, 2016). Granted, a sociocultural orientation is not evident in all of its coursework and this will be discussed further in my textual analysis of programmatic materials. However, the purpose of this inquiry is to understand how

graduates take the exposure, even if it is incomplete, to sociocultural perspectives and critical reflection into their daily practice.

Special education teachers do not represent a singular, monolithic category. Both the identities that they claim and the meanings that are imposed by others on special educators influence the participants' understanding of social processes. To the greatest extent possible, I sought out participants who claim a variety of racial/ethnic groups, linguistic backgrounds, abilities, and gender identities. This variance added nuance to the data and co-constructed analysis to build more sophisticated understandings of how social processes lead to marginalization or inclusivity in special education. Participants for this study included UPCC graduates who held both an understanding of oppressive systems in special education and a commitment to inclusion. In this way, we could engage in a critical dialogue that lead to a deeper understanding of their role in this process and how they might resist dominant ideologies. We also explored how their commitment necessitated shifts as participants engaged in their communities of practice. While I will go into further detail about the lived experiences of each participant in my analysis, this section will briefly introduce the participants, their backgrounds, and motivating factors for selected UPCC for their graduate studies.

**Sarah.** Sarah was an African-American woman in her late 20s. She grew up in the suburbs of Center City in a middle-class family. While Sarah excelled academically at the affluent, primarily White suburban high school she attended, she also faced racial and class discrimination from teachers and peers. Due to her experiences feeling like an outsider in high school, she chose to attend a Historically Black College where she earned her accounting degree. While working as an accountant in Iowa, she tutored a Sudanese refugee who had been diagnosed with a learning disability. Sarah made many connections between her tutee's

inequitable interactions with teachers in rural Iowa to her own high school experience. She decided to make a career change and pursue her teaching degree. She felt drawn to UPCC's program because she wanted to learn more about the systemic inequity that her tutee was facing, "because I'm like she's [her tutee] not the only one. So, I really began to investigate what's really going on" (Sarah Interview 1). At the time of this study she had been teaching for three years at Smithville South Middle School in a self-contained "Behavior Skills" classroom for students identified with an Emotional Disturbance disability label.

**Denise.** Denise was a White woman in her 40s and came to special education from early childhood education. Prior to starting the Master's program at UPCC, she worked for several organizations in Center City that provide early childhood education for children who have experienced abuse, neglect, trauma, or poverty. Through her interactions with children and families at these organizations she found that "the level of poverty and uneducated students and adults was alarming. So, I was like, 'Why is this happening?'" (Denise Interview 1). She decided to attend UPCC in part because she could explore these questions in greater depth. She was also a single mother at the time and UPCC offered night classes that were close to her home so that she could be near-by should her daughter need her. When this study took place, Denise was in her first year working at Haverford Elementary School in a Cross Categorical or "Cross Cat" room, which is the term for a self-contained room with students who have various disability labels and grade levels.

**Anna.** After attending UPCC for undergrad Anna attended an elite institution on the East coast and received a graduate degree in Women's Studies. With this degree, she returned to Center City and work as a paraprofessional, which she continued throughout her studies in the Special Education Master's program. Anna, a White woman in her late 30s, identified different



reasons for attending UPCC than the other participants. Given her experiences as a self-identified gay woman and her degree in Women's Studies she felt knowledgeable about systemic inequity, "I appreciate that and theoretically that makes great sense but what does that look like when you execute it in the classroom?" (Anna Interview 1). Instead she wanted the program to provide more information about the technical aspects of teaching and allow her to "dig deeper" (Anna Interview 1) into what she was already doing with her students. At the time of the present study, Anna was in her first year at an elementary charter school (second year out of the program) as a resource room teacher who exclusively taught in small pull-out groups.

**Natalie.** Natalie, a White woman in her mid 20s, always imagined herself working with "underprivileged" (Natalie Interview 1) families and children to the astonishment of her White, middle class family members in rural Iowa. Initially, she imagined working in family law but had a change of heart while studying for the LSAT. At the time, she was an undergraduate at UPCC and went to speak with a faculty member in the Special Education Department. After the conversation, she felt compelled to pursue a career in special education and thought, "This is what I think I need to do" (Natalie Interview 1). She appreciated the program's focus on urban education because it allowed her to pursue her self-professed passion of working with individuals, particularly children, who had experienced systemic inequity. When people question her decision to work in urban schools as opposed to more affluent suburban schools she simply says, "It's what I wanna do, it's so rewarding" (Natalie Interview 1). Natalie loves working with students and even coaches a championship volleyball team of high school girls. At the time of this study, Natalie was in her third year as a resource room teacher at Southside High School, where she primarily pushes into her students' general education classes and holds two study skills classes a day.

## **Participant Recruitment and Consenting Procedures**

Participants who fit the selection criteria, as described in a previous section, and their contact information were identified by with the Chair of the UPCC Master's Program, Dr. Xavier Mills. Once he identified a possible array of participants, I reached out to them via email and/or Facebook (see APPENDIX E). As participants responded with interest, we set up times to introduce myself and talk about the project over the phone. Upon agreement to participate, the participants introduced me to their administration so that they could provide the appropriate approval to conduct a research study in their school and district, which varied from district to district.

**Teachers.** At the first interview, I provided participants with two copies of the letter of consent (APPENDIX H), one that they signed and another that they could keep for their records. They were provided with an opportunity to review the document and ask me any additional questions that they may have. I also had teachers sign a video share approval form (APPENDIX K) so that I could use video clips for professional presentations. I then collected the signed documents which were physically stored in a locked filing cabinet in addition to being stored electronically on my password protected laptop.

**Administrators.** After speaking with each participant, I had them reach out to their administrator to express their interest in participating in the study. Once I heard back from the participants that their administrators approved of their participation, I introduced to myself via email to the administrators (APPENDIX F). I also requested to schedule a meeting for the administrator interview at that time. Two of the four administrators did not respond to my initial email communication so I had to follow up via phone call through their individual secretaries to set up the meeting. At the time of the administrator interview, I provided the administrators with

two copies of the letter of consent (APPENDIX I), one for them to sign and another for their own records. The physical forms were stored in a locked filing cabinet and electronically on my password protected laptop.

**Students.** At the time of the first teacher interview, the teacher participants and I agreed on a time for the second participant observation and video recording. Based on this schedule, they identified the students that would be present for the lesson and would require parent or guardian consent to be video recorded. I provided the teacher participants with three documents for them to give the parents and guardians of the student participants: (a) letter of consent (APPENDIX J), (b) a video share form that gave me permission to share the videos for the purposes of professional presentations (APPENDIX L), and (c) an introduction letter (APPENDIX G) that provided a brief synopsis of the study in less formal language than on the consent form. Parents and guardians were informed that while the student participants' voices may be heard on the recording, all identifying information (e.g. names of people or places) would be masked on the recording and children's faces would be blurred out. The teachers used various methods that they determined would be most productive for securing parent signatures. Two of the teacher participants had parents sign the forms at parent/teacher conferences. Other teachers called ahead of sending home the forms and either spoke with parents or left voicemails giving them an overview of the present study and the forms that they would be signing. As per school protocol, I did not directly reach out to parents but did provide my contact information in case they had any additional questions that the teacher participants could not answer themselves. Similar to the teacher and administrator consent forms, the signed parent and guardian consent forms were also stored in a locked filing cabinet and password protected laptop.

## Site Selection

My project was a multi-school site study in and around Center City-a large Midwestern city. School sites were determined primarily by the participant selection criteria and participant willingness to engage in the study. One of the criteria for my participants was that they work in an urban school context. Two of my participants were in urban districts as defined by Milner (2015) or districts with urban characteristics (Milner, 2015) that employ UPCC's graduates. My site selection included participants from multiple districts in order to identify similarities and differences across contexts. I chose urban settings because of their historic link to pervasive systemic inequity due to "racism, discrimination, and other forms of oppression" (Milner, 2015, p. 530). Indeed, urban schools can be sites that reproduce these historic forms of inequity for a number of structural, economic, and political reasons that are perpetuated in local and distal practices that preserve the status quo. In addition to Milner's (2015) typology, it is also important to understand urban areas as socially constructed (Annamma, Anyon, Joseph, Farrar, Greer, Downing, & Simmons, 2016). These imaginings of real spaces often ghettoize urban communities of color. Often urban and Black are often considered synonymous, which oversimplifies the diversity of urban spaces. In the next chapter I will describe how both the preparation program and participants imagined urban schools as predominantly comprised of people in need, specifically poor people of color, even when the four school sites had huge variance in terms of racial composition including one school with a white majority. In this way, I do not want to suggest urban as a proxy for race but rather recognize that participants and the messages in their preparation often did.

**Smithville South Middle School.** Sarah works at Smithville South Middle School, which is in a suburb of Center City called Smithville. The school, a relic of 1970's architecture,

is a sprawling single story building situated in a large parking lot. The school serves grades 6-8 with a total enrollment of around 600 students in 2016. While Smithville South is located in a suburban area it can still be categorized as “Urban Characteristic” (Milner et al., 2015) because it has some of the characteristics historically associated with urban schools. For instance, the student body is comprised of multiple races and ethnicities with 60% African-American students, followed by 21% White students, and 12% Hispanic students. In addition, the majority of Smithville South students (71%) qualify for free and reduced lunch, which Sarah self-reported that statistic included all the students in her self-contained room. Graduation rates for students with IEPs are around 70%, which is less than the district wide graduation rate of 80%.

According to Sarah there is a clear racial and socioeconomic distinction between Smithville South and Smithville proper, “just the perception of the two sides [of Smithville] is like a definite division” (Sarah Interview 1). She described how community members view Smithville South as a less desirable cluster of schools because the area has more low income housing and the lower college qualifying standardized test scores. Sarah’s administrator also indicated a bias against Smithville South schools in their technology policy, where 6<sup>th</sup> grade students are not permitted to bring home their school issued iPads, “I think it is one of those things we just talked about. Is there a prejudice that we have about broken homes and inconsistent home lives that plays into us not trusting what happens outside” (Sarah Administrator Interview)? He compares the policy to his own children’s school district in a more affluent suburb, where very young elementary school children are able to bring their iPads to and from school as they deem necessary. Therefore, Smithville South and Sarah’s school by association carries a stereotypical urban connotation where the term urban stands in as proxy term for poverty, crime, and poor education.

**Haverford Elementary School.** Denise's school site, Haverford Elementary School, is a large elementary school serving nearly 750 students in grades Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup>. It is located in a suburban neighborhood surrounded by trees. Haverford's school district is located in the North Center City School District, which on the northern outskirts of Center City. The data from this relatively district shows very stratified statistics in terms of race and socioeconomic status across schools and communities. This stratification across schools was noted by Denise in interviews where she compared her school to more affluent and homogeneous communities. Haverford has a majority of White students (60%) with almost equal representation from other racial categories such as Asian (18%), Black (15%), and Hispanic (14%). Its free and reduced lunch rate is around 70%. Additionally, Haverford has a large percentage of English Language Learners (10%) compared to midsize suburban areas where the National Center for Education Statistics places more around 6%. For these reasons, Haverford is also considered urban characteristic according to Milner's typology of urban schools (2015).

**Summit Institute-Brightside.** Anna and her colleagues refer to her school simply as Brightside but it is part of a larger charter network in Center City called Summit Institute. This young network has only been around a few years and continues to grow. Brightside is the network's second school and in its first year of operation. The school currently holds grades one through four, with the plan to add a grade each year up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Families apply to a lottery to win a place in the school's enrollment. The school itself is located in the bustling downtown Center City business and art district. The school is a grand Victorian building has charming architectural touches such as intricate woodwork, sweeping staircases, and dark wood floors. The school is bright and clean and covered in child artwork. Just this year, Summit Institute received a multi-million dollar gift from a prominent Center City family known for its philanthropic

endeavors and their name on many of the city's important cultural centers. Rooms are equipped with flat screen TV's, SmartBoards, and individual printers. In comparison to the other schools, Brightside seemed flush with resources to create an esthetically beautiful and stimulating educational environment.

During the year of this study, Brightside's enrollment was 172 students. Unfortunately, building specific data for Brightside was not available at the time of this study due to it being the school's first year. Anna and her administrator described how the founder of Summit Institute strove to found an integrated school with students from different races and socioeconomic statuses. This is reflected in the other Summit Institute school where there are approximately equal percentages of Black and White students (40% each) with around 20% Hispanic students. About 60% of students receive free and reduced lunch and there are under 10% ELL students. These percentages are lower than the other school sites in this study. While not the exact numbers at Brightside, it can be reasonably inferred that it has similar demographics due to the explicit commitment of the school's leadership to have equal representation across demographic points. According to Milner et al. (2015) Brightside would be considered 'urban emergent' as it is located in a mid-sized city and has a diverse student representation.

**Southside High School.** Southside High School, Natalie's school site, was located in the Center City School District near downtown. In contrast to Smithville South Middle or Haverford Elementary, the area around the school was less of a suburban residential area but more of a business and cultural center where Center City residents come to buy goods and food. Shops, markets, and restaurants surround the school. Many of them advertising food from a variety of ethnic traditions such as Mexican, Indian, and Chinese food. Around Valentine's Day the parking lots of the stores were flooded with pop up vendors selling balloons, flower bouquets,

and giant stuffed teddy bears. Southside High School is located in an old looming, large building made of grey stone. It looks more like a state house than a high school. The entrance of the school is guarded by a security guard and metal detector. I had to show my driver's license to get in each time and was printed a sticker with my name and picture that I had to wear while in the building. The security guard also checked my bag each time. Although the other schools had similar procedures where they examined my driver's license and gave me a guest pass sticker, this was the only school that searched my bag and required me to enter through a metal detector. For me, this entry process echoed similar hyper-surveillance systems across the country at some urban schools. Natalie and her students also indicated that the school had a reputation for being disorganized. For instance, when Natalie tried to reference the basketball schedule to check the time of that evening's game, her student just shook his head and said, "You know that [the schedule] ain't right" (Natalie Video Clip Natalie Building Relationships) to the bemusement of his classmates. It seems like the frequent miscommunication across the school has become a running joke in Natalie's class. This interaction fit the stereotype of a large, under-resourced urban schools struggling to streamline systems of communication.

According to Milner's typology of urban schools, Southside would be considered 'urban emergent.' It is not 'urban intensive' since Center City is not as large of a metropolis as New York or Los Angeles, but rather a mid-size city similar in size and population to Seattle. However, Southside has characteristics of urban intensive schools such as large enrollment (700 students), high numbers of students receiving free and reduced lunch (over 80%) and a large ELL population (20%). Southside is not particularly diverse along racial/ethnic categories with the majority of students at Southside are Black (50%) and Hispanic (30%) with White and Asian students comprising each comprising less than 10% of the entire student body. However, the



student population mirrors similar demographic patterns where urban schools are largely segregated between students of color and their White peers.

### **Access**

As I engaged in the ethnographic research process, I recognized that I was what Agar (1996) calls, “the professional stranger.” By this, I mean that I was an outsider coming into a context bearing both the identities that I claimed and also the identities that the site participants placed upon me. These identities afforded me research opportunities but also constrained my ability to gain access to information. For instance, my Whiteness, middle class background, my cisgender identity, ability to speak English, as well as my educational history, allowed me to aptly traverse the dominant culture and may have signaled privilege and purveyor of dominant values to individuals at my research sites. At the same time, my position as a graduate student researcher at a research-intensive institution placed me outside of PK-12 education (in spite of my experience as a teacher) and in the ivory towers of academia. While I had been an urban special educator, I no longer inhabited that identity or those experiences on a daily basis like my participants. It is significant to our dynamic as a side by side research team that after I completed my research activities, I left the school context. Therefore, the research methods that I employed needed to address not only the social identities of my participants, but also recognize the power differential that my own social identities signaled to others.

I recognized that asked my participants to make themselves vulnerable by sharing the very personal act of teaching. I had to honor their openness in order to build trust. Moreover, my research made my participants vulnerable to critique by examining ways in which special education teachers engaged in activities that reify marginalizing practices in schools. This process at times threatened our level of trust and undermined the purpose of my research to

jointly expose inequity through critical reflection. In my research, I employed two strategies to both honor my participants' openness and also achieve the aims of my inquiry. First, while I did not shy away from critical analysis, I continually grounded my analysis in the larger context of the school organization. The dominant schooling ideologies that pathologize difference and strive for normalcy remain deeply embedded in school systems and the communities of practice (Collins, 2013; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). The ways in which special education teachers construct and enact their teacher identities within communities of practice are colored by these dominant ideologies in both explicit and tacit ways (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). Second, I looked for ways in which teachers reified marginalizing practices (e.g., "ability as an excuse for exclusion") but also sought to understand the degree to which they can actively resisted these systems and promoted inclusivity. By situating their actions within the larger organizational structure of schools and also highlighting points of resistance to marginalization, I aimed to build trusting partnerships with the teachers but also facilitate greater inclusion for students with disabilities.

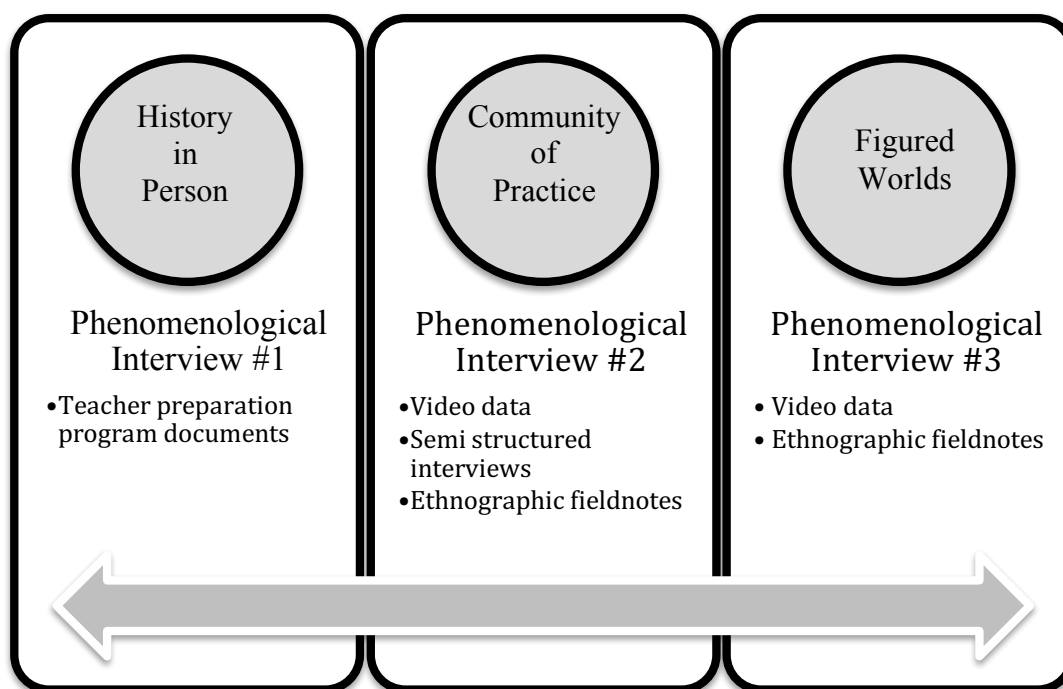
### **Representation**

I selected critical ethnographic methods (Madison, 2012) as a methodological approach. Critical ethnography challenges traditional power dynamics not only within institutional contexts but also within the process of research itself. My methodological tools demonstrated my commitment to exposing, although not wholly eliminating, these power dynamics through a "studying side-by side" approach. (Erickson, 2006b) By employing phenomenological interviewing techniques, I actively situated the teachers' activity within the structural constraints of their community of practice rather than viewing their actions as totally autonomous and detached from the power dynamics located in the environment (Farber & Azar, 1999; Milner,

2008). Furthermore, the teachers played a prominent role in the research process. For example, the participants and I reflected and analyzed their videos together in the second interview. In addition, my participants selected their own video clips for the purposes of the reflective video study group. Following Tochan's (2007) advice, I took secondary role in the study group so as not to be the sole organizer of knowledge. The conversation in these groups took place primarily amongst participants giving them a prominent voice in the ongoing process of data analysis. In sum, the data collection and analysis processes included pre-structured opportunities for teacher input and refinement of how they are represented in the data.

### **Methodological Tools**

In the previous section, I described my research plan, timeline of research activities, as well as my site and participant selection processes. In this section, I will describe the methodological tools (Figure 3) that I used to gather data. I differentiate between primary and secondary methodological tools. Since special educator identity construction is my main unit of analysis, the primary methodological tools are designed to gather data directly from the teachers themselves. My secondary methodological tools, then, helped me to contextualize the teachers' daily practice and informed the development of the primary tools through an iterative process.



*Figure 3.* Methodological tools. This figure shows the methodological tools used in this study and how they correspond to the conceptual framework and data sources.

### **Primary Methodological Tools**

**Phenomenological Interviews.** In order to explore how teachers (re)constitute their identity in their communities of practice, I employed phenomenological interviewing techniques (Seidman, 2006b). This method combined life-history with in-depth interviewing to explore participants' lived experiences, how they make meaning of that experience, and how that meaning affects the way that they carry out everyday practices (Seidman, 2006a). Ultimately, this process sought to have the participant reconstruct their experiences within a specific topic under investigation, how teachers understand the inclusive messages from their teacher preparation program and implement them within the context in which they work. The way in which their teacher preparation program informed their understanding of their role as special educators had implications for the ways in which teachers reified and resisted structural oppression within their everyday work environment.

Phenomenological interviewing entailed a series of three separate but progressive interviews with each participant (Seidman, 2006b). The theoretical underlying assumption for the structure and organization of this approach was that the teachers' behavior becomes meaningful and understandable when it is placed within the context of where people live and work (Erickson, 2004; Holland et al., 1998). The first interview was meant to establish the participant's experience through open-ended questioning techniques (Seidman, 2006b). My interview guide was informed by my textual analysis of artifacts from the teacher preparation program (see secondary methodological tools). I investigated the messages, specifically around inclusion, infused throughout teachers' preparation programs and the meaning that these messages had for individual teachers. The meaning that the teachers constructed and, presumably enacted, was informed by their personal histories and social identities. Therefore, the interview guide focused on both on how the messages impacted their teaching, but also how the interaction between the messages and their teaching was mediated through individuals' personal histories.

The second interview built on the first by establishing the context in we situated the participants' experience. For this interview, the participants and I conducted a joint video analysis of a recording of their practice. Drawing on the first interview, we analyzed the ways in which their community of practice affords and constrains inclusivity and equity. The third interview took the form of a reflexive group video study (see video data). Here, the participants shared selected clips of their videos with one another for the purposes of reflecting on their experiences. The discussion focused on the institutional constraints and affordances that shape their practice around inclusion for the purposes of reifying or resisting structural oppression within their schools.

**Video Data.** One way in which I engaged my participants in a critical analysis of the structural inequities was through reflexive video analysis. I chose video because it allowed for situated research by opening up lived experiences for deeper understanding and reflection (Tochan, 2007). Video was particularly useful as a mechanism to investigate identity formation because “it reveals identity in action, it can provide an integrated approach to identity formation” (Tochan, 2007, p. 58). In this way, teachers reflected on the ways in which they enacted their identity in classroom practice. By connecting non-verbal interaction to discourse, video helped myself and my participants make sense of the complex social interactions that mediate their ongoing identity formation (Erickson, 2006c).

In my study, video was used in three ways. The first purpose was as the basis for a second interview with my participants. Rather than approaching this interview with a narrow set of questions, I used the video as the basis for a conversation in which we co-constructed meaning through dialogue. However, this does not mean that our conversation did not focus on a specific framework for analysis. Tochan (2007) advises that video analysis should always be conducted with a framework that specifies a specific point of impact. In this interview, I combined two of these frameworks to guide the analysis. Firstly, I drew on a sociocognitive framework, which seeks to bring awareness through lived experiences in order to dislodge taken for granted assumptions (Tochan, 2007). Teachers viewed their classroom practice, a routine aspect of their daily professional lives, in a way that troubled the assumptions under which they work. Furthermore, I employed the critical framework in order to examine the social process of learning as either an oppressive or liberating force (Tochan, 2007). It was important for me to combine these two frameworks because it is not enough to simply disrupt assumptions. My participants and I co-constructed data (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014) in order to identify how

these assumptions undergirded their practices for the purposes of reification or resistance to structural oppression. This process utilized a more sophisticated approach to video reflection in education. Rather than looking at video as a past, static event, it moved the reflection to a focus on present and future actions as well as their implications for equity and inclusion (Erickson, 2011).

My second use of video employed the side-by-side approach to my research (Erickson, 2006b). After our second interview, I asked the participants to select two short clips that demonstrated processes of reification and resistance based on the first two interviews. This process offered a second layer to the video analysis by the participants. Tochan (2007) argues that video editing itself is an act of research because it requires collecting, organizing and interpreting data. Instead of the researcher selecting and editing the clips, the teachers themselves will engaged in the research process through curation (see Phenomenological Interviews).

I utilized Tochan's (2007) approach to reflexive video study groups. The benefit of the group setting was that it enabled social construction of knowledge by moving the viewing of the video from individual consumption to a shared exchange. Indeed, Creswell (2003) argues that the process of meaning making is best done through discussion and interaction with others. The bottom up approach of having participants curate their own video clips opened up space for the participants to learn from each other. This shielded against the researcher being the sole organizer of knowledge within the study group. This was of particular importance with the researcher/participant power dynamics, which could result in discussion that sought to satiate the goals of the researcher rather than the affordance of space for multiple interpretive analyses by participants themselves.

## Secondary Methodological Tools

**Teacher Preparation Program Documents.** Prior to my interviews with participants, I gathered artifacts from my participants' teacher preparation program for the purposes of textual analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Examples of artifacts that were collected include syllabi, fieldwork descriptions, rubrics, assessments, etc. While these documents did not serve as primary data in my analysis, they informed the way that I constructed my interview guide for the first interview with participants. They also served as anchoring artifacts that were referenced in the other three interviews in order to make connections between the teacher preparation program and the teachers' communities of practice. Moreover, they provided me with background knowledge around the teacher preparation program and the messages that teachers used to construct their identities as they enter communities of practice.

**Semi-structured Interviews.** In order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the context in which the teachers in my study work, I conducted an interview with their administrators. This interview did not focus on individual teacher performance. Rather, I investigated the administrative expectations for all teachers in the school. The purpose of this was to understand the "regime of competence" (Wenger, 1998) in the community of practice as understood and perpetuated by the administration. Specifically, I asked the administrator to describe how they message and evaluate these expectations. I also asked if teachers are encouraged to address social justice, equity, or inclusion in their work and if this is a value held by those with institutional power. In my analysis, I connected the information collected in these interviews to the systems of power documented in the literature that operate within schools that operate to marginalize both teachers and students (Collins, 2013; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011; Milner, 2008). As secondary data sources, these interviews informed my interview guide for the



second interview in which the participants and I situate their teacher preparation experience within the context of their work. The information gleaned from these interviews helped to illuminate the institutional constraints within which the participating teachers operated.

**Ethnographic fieldnotes.** I used ethnographic fieldnotes to gather data during the two participant observations (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). During participant observation #1, I observed my participants for one period in their classrooms. The purposes of this observation were to establish pertinent information about the participants' community of practice (Holland et al., 1998). In particular, I looked for elements that conveyed the teachers' roles and responsibilities as dictated by their administrator. Information that I observed and noted included, assignment, number of students served, subjects covered, daily schedule, etc. During participant observation #2, I observed another one-hour lesson, which was also video recorded (see video data). The purpose of this observation was to provide additional data that would contextualize the video analysis. For instance, my fieldnotes included events or activities that may not be included in the video frame. For both observations, I jotted notes during the observation. I then took these jots and wrote them into ethnographic fieldnotes immediately following the observation. This involved more than just observed talk or activities into written words (Emerson et al., 2011). Rather, I augmented my fieldnotes with observations from my own interpretive lens. This included my own reflections, questions, and evolving interpretations of these observations. I recognize that I purposefully emphasized different features and actions while marginalizing others. The selection process of what to focus on was informed by my conceptual framework as well as the goals and purposes of this study.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) describe qualitative data analysis as “the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that you accumulate to enable you to come up with findings” (p. 147). Indeed, the materials gathered through qualitative research themselves are not data (Erickson, 2004). Rather, the researcher must find the data within these sources through active and repeated engagement with them. This process can at times be turbulent. However, qualitative researchers can employ various analytical tools to mine and make sense of the corpus of data (Gutiérrez & Stone, 2000). In this section, I explain my data analysis approach in this study (see Figure 4).

### **Data Analysis Guiding Principals**

In my analysis, I built upon traditional grounded theory methods by taking it up with a social constructionist approach (Charmaz, 2008). Constructivist grounded theory uses Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) guidelines while resisting positivist assumptions (Charmaz, 2008). As opposed to positivist approaches in research, constructivist grounded theorists do not assume that “truth” or “facts” exist waiting to be uncovered through research. Nor does it assume that researchers come to the process of data analysis as blank slates devoid of particular histories, interests, or interpretive frames of reference. In other words, the goal of data analysis in constructivist grounded theory is always an interpretive version of reality.

Since I am committed to a critical ethnographic methodological approach (Madison, 2012), I will employ a social justice stance in all aspects of my research. Constructivist grounded theory is particularly useful for social justice inquiry because it purposefully integrates lived experience with social conditions in the data analysis process (Charmaz, 2008). Constructivist grounded theory for social justice foregrounds issues related to equity and power by locating

subjective and collective experience in larger cultural practices, sociopolitical interests, and social positioning (Collins, 2013). The analysis moves beyond the spoken interactions in order to consider how these interactions demonstrate ways in which the environment and the individual mutually constitute each other. Futch and Fine (2014) describe this mutual constitution as moving away from positivist notions that assume that the way in which individuals represent themselves is a “true window to the soul” (p. 43). Rather, they advocate for an epistemological change in data analysis where researchers envision the self in constant evolution through interaction between individuals and their contexts. In this way, analysis can begin to explore the tensions between individual positioning and the structures under which individuals operate. It is important for the researchers to describe social action in light of the historical and material resources afforded to the individuals as not to ignore the pre-structured constraints that participants face in the real world (Erickson, 2006b). In doing so, it purposefully explores the tensions between reality and ideals as well as how individuals navigate these tensions based on the affordances and constraints of their context. This approach temporally situates the interactions within a historical context throughout the analysis process in order to see the consequences of past policies made real in everyday life. This type of analysis can also demonstrate opportunities for social justice or injustice that reside in the daily practices of teaching and learning (Erikson, 2006b).

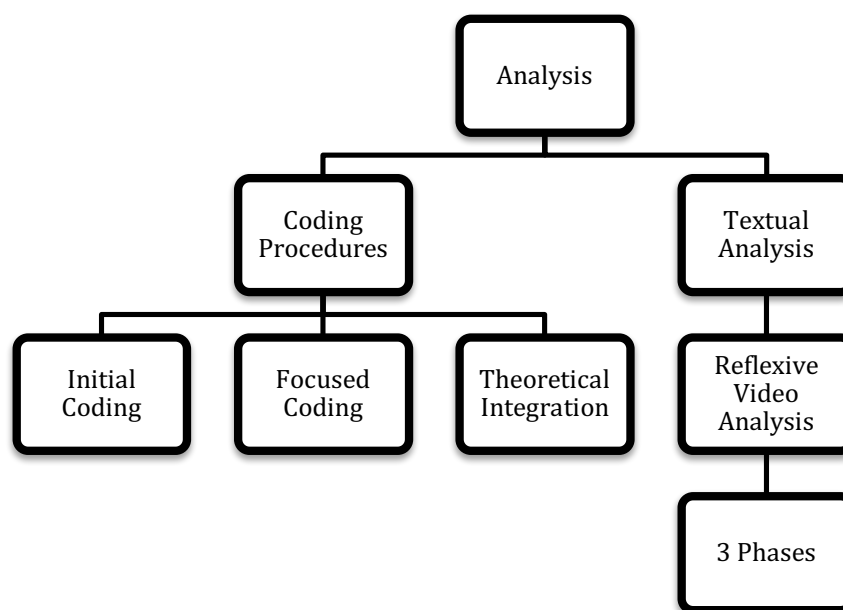
In my own data analysis, I used a constructivist grounded theory for social justice approach by situating the actions of my participants within the larger historical and sociocultural context. Not only did I investigate the consequences of these actions, but also the degree to which they were explicitly aware of such consequences as well as their abilities to impact teaching and learning for equitable and inclusive purposes. Through this process, I sought what

Denzin (1989) describes as interpretive sufficiency, or considering the rich cultural complexity of the situation through multiple interpretations including my own. A significant part of the interpretive lens that I brought to the analysis came from my conceptual framework. In the next section, I will describe how my conceptual framework generally influenced the data analysis process.

### **General Coding Procedures**

Coding represents a significant part of qualitative data analysis. It is the researcher's first attempt at analytical interpretation (Charmaz, 2006). It is through this iterative process that the researcher defines what is happening but also wrestles with its meaning. My grounded theory approach to coding used both inductive and deductive analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) using my conceptual framework as a guide (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012) in order to explain the emergent ideas in relation to theory and other relevant scholarship (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Charmaz (2006) describes the two approaches to data analysis with a metaphor, "Grounded theory coding generates the bones of your analysis. Theoretical integration will assemble these bones into a working skeleton" (p. 45). My coding process involved staying close to the data by emphasizing the actions and social processes of my participants but also used theoretical frames to make sense of the observed phenomenon. My coding process drew on the three main phases described by Charmaz (2006): initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical integration. During the coding process, I maintained a researcher notebook after each series of data collection. Bogden and Biklen (2003) recommend keeping such a journal as not to lose insights or hunches in the interim between data collection and analysis. In this notebook, I recorded my initial reactions after visiting the research sites. I made sure to note any connections to relevant literature or the emergent themes. I also detailed my initial feelings, reflections, and hunches from the

interactions with the participants. Additionally, I also used analytic memos as another means of initial data analysis. Each month of the data analysis process, I developed an analytic memo by integrating data with the relevant literature in order to refine my coding and theme development from that particular month. The researcher journal and analytic memos helped me to stay involved in the analysis process as I gathered data (Charmaz, 2014). It helped me to see how certain codes stood out as well as to make comparisons between data sources, codes, and themes.



*Figure 4.* Data analysis procedures. This figure shows the different phases and approaches to the data analysis.

During the initial coding phase, I broke up the data into smaller components. Depending on the data source and its purposes, I used line-by-line, segment-by-segment, or incident-by-incident (Charmaz, 2006; Gibbs, 2008; Strauss, 1987). For instance, when I analyzed interview transcripts, line-by-line analysis was appropriate because I wanted to analyze the teachers' underlying assumptions as they shifted and morphed throughout the narrative. When analyzing video recording, incident-by-incident coding was more appropriate because I will be analyzed the teachers' interaction with students and classroom resources (Erickson, 2006a). It was also

helpful to analyze the same data sources with both approaches in order to provide multiple interpretations of the same event. Whichever way I segmented the data, the initial coding phase remained close to the data itself with precise and short codes that reflect the observed actions and social processes.

During the focused coding phase, I looked for the most significant or frequent codes identified during initial coding (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss, 1987). This involved identifying certain vocabulary, patterns of behavior, or ways of thinking that repeat and stand out (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). This level of analysis pulled away from the raw data by taking a directive role as the researcher in sifting through the codes and making selections. However, the selective process had to be substantiated by the initial codes themselves. This process was not linear but rather involved looking at the initial codes in multiple ways such as looking at data by source or grouping data by individual participant and looking for shifts over time. Drawing on comparative method (Charmaz, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I compared data within data, data within categories, and categories with categories. This comparison helped to raise questions about my own assumptions within the codes that I imposed on the data. Through this process, I developed more substantive codes that identified patterns or trends across data sources.

The final coding phase, theoretical integration, helped to clarify and sharpen the analysis from the focused coding phase (Charmaz, 2006). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) emphasized the importance of relating your findings to the existing concepts identified in the literature. By connecting work to existing theory and scholarship, I made the case that my findings were consequential (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). During theoretical integration stage, I used my conceptual framework to bring a theoretical lens to the codes. This helped to situate my codes within the existing literature. At the same time, I used the emergent data analysis from the

previous two phases to trouble existing theory and knowledge. In doing so, I analyzed the data not only for how it confirms existing theory but also how it challenged it and thus offered suggestions for refinement (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). This section described my general approaches to coding using three phases: initial, focused, and theoretical integration. However, my data analysis processes took different forms based on the data source. In the next section, I will describe the specific approach I took for each type of data source.

**Textual Analysis.** In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of my participants' teacher preparation experiences, I conducted a textual analysis of materials from their preparation program. Since these documents existed prior to the research project, they were extant texts because I had no impact their construction (Charmaz, 2006). As these are texts, I was cognizant of the fact that texts are not objective facts but rather representations of what authors believe and also as tools to be consumed and mediated by an audience (Prior, 2003). Therefore, I read each document and created a fieldnote entry (Emerson, et al., 2011) for each one that was then analyzed and coded according to the coding procedures described previously. I generated my fieldnotes by using the following approach. I read the texts in order to identify related to the intended audience of these documents as well as their authors. I also explored the production and presentation of these documents. First, I started by analyzing their content. Next, I explored their structure and the relationship between structure and content (Charmaz, 2006). Questions that guided the textual analysis included, (a) Which contextual meanings does the text imply?; (b) How does its content construct images of reality?; (c) Which rules govern the construction of the text and how do they reflect both tacit assumptions and explicit meanings?; and (d) Who benefits from the text and why? Specifically, I focused on the way inclusion was conceptualized, presented, and reinforced throughout the teacher preparation program. This involved locating

where these documents were presented to pre-service teachers in the chronological timeframe of their preparation program, how often inclusive ideas got repeated across courses and experiences, as well as the conflicting messages about inclusion that may have caused dissonance for pre-service teachers. It also included identifying what information about inclusion was left out and the implications of that omission on the program's overall approach to inclusion. At the same time, I could not assume that these texts directly mirrored the actual organizational and pedagogical practice of the teacher preparation program since I did not observe instructional practices nor interview anyone associated with the program (Charmaz, 2006). I also used my textual analysis to create the first interview guide in order to explore my participants' preparation experience in relation to these documents and how it impacted their present activity in the classroom.

**Interview Transcripts (Interviews 1 and 2).** I conducted a series three progressive interviews with my participants using phenomenological interview methods (Seidman, 2006b). The purpose of this method was to understand my participants' lived experiences, how they made meaning of that experience and how that meaning was carried out through everyday practices (Seidman, 2006a). I used inductive and deductive coding procedures as described in my general coding approach. For the theoretical integration portion of the coding, I analyzed the data according to the corresponding prong of my conceptual framework. My analysis of the first interview sought to situate the participants' history in person by exploring the participants' preparation and personal experiences as they are (re)made through contentious local practice (Holland & Lave, 2001; 2009). The analysis of the second interview focused on how the regime of competence (Wenger, 1998) of the specific community of practice affords and constrains the teachers' abilities to enact inclusion. Finally, my analysis of the reflexive group video analysis



(third interview) that explored the teachers' figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) of urban special education.

**Reflexive Video Analysis (Interview 3).** This study used video recordings in two ways. First, I analyzed the videos independently as a way to understand how my participants' history in person gets enacted in their community of practice. This included a 45-minute to one 1 hour-long video recording of a single lesson. This analysis informed the interview guide for the second interview in the phenomenological interview series. Second, I used the video recording used as the basis for the third interview, a reflexive group video analysis. For my independent analysis of the video recording, I use Erickson's (2006a) Type I approach to video analysis. Erickson emphasizes that video itself is not data but an information source from which data needs to be identified. Using his Type 1 approach, I started with the video as a whole and then broke it down into smaller parts. Step one was to review the entire recorded event without stopping. During this viewing, I noted any major transitions in activity. Step 2 involved reviewing the entire event again but stopping at the major section boundaries in order to note the times in which they occurred. Section boundaries included shifts in participants, configurations, topics, or activities. Since I was analyzing video recordings of a lesson, these shifts included students moving from one lesson activity to another or changing positions in the classroom. Step 3 involved selecting a particular episode of interest. I used activity logs as a way to determine which incidents to focus on. Activity logs helped me to mine video data at 30 minute intervals as a means of data analysis. Steps 1 through 3 informed the interview plan for the second interview in the phenomenological interview process. Step 4 replayed the video recording with the participants so as to have them convey what they were thinking and feeling at the time. Step 4 took place during the second interview with the teachers in my study. Here I replayed the pre-selected strips of video and

asked them to explain their thought processes. I asked them to relate their answers to their teacher preparation experience and personal history as described in the first interview but also the values, norms, and rules of their community of practice. Together, we analyzed the opportunities that they have to subvert the system and promote inclusive practices.

### **Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) define trustworthiness as the methods and degree to which the researcher persuades the audience that their inquiry is worth the audience's attention and consideration. They propose two ways in which the research can convey trustworthiness. The first is to establish the truth value of the findings. For these purposes, I followed the guidelines for ensuring trustworthiness and credibility in special education research (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005). I triangulated my data across multiple data sources, research methods, participants, and theory. Throughout the research process, I engaged in weekly peer debriefing around the analysis evolution. Since I used studying side-by-side methods (Erickson, 2006b), I designed my study to include embedded member checks at specific points of the data analysis. For instance, my first interview served as a member check of the textual analysis of resources from the teacher preparation program. The second interview provided for a member check of the video analysis. The third interview, or reflexive video study group, reflected back on the previous two interviews and provided insight into the teachers' shifting identity across the study. Furthermore, I actively sought disconfirming evidence that challenges or troubles our thematic findings in order to check my understanding of the social processes I seek to explain (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). Finally, I used *NVivo* to store and analyze my data. Along with my analytic memos, these resources serve as an audit trail of my data analysis

evolution. Through these methods, I tried to convey to my audience that there is truth value in the claims that I made from my data.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also emphasize the need to demonstrate applicability to the audience. By this they mean how the findings can be applied to other similar contexts. Brantlinger and colleagues (2005) call this particularizability. To accomplish this, I used thick, detailed descriptions so that the consumers of my research could see spaces for application of the implications in other contexts. The purposes of my study were to understand how teachers negotiate their teacher identity around inclusion in urban settings. My goals were that the implications that I present will inform critical inclusive teacher preparation for urban settings. Thus, I used my conceptual framework in order to relate my findings to the issues and concerns in the literature related to urban special education and critical inclusive teacher education so that my work would resonate with others engaged in similar work.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I described my methodological approaches to answering my three research questions. At each step in the process, I tried to convey how my methodology was grounded in critical ethnographic methods (Madison, 2012). In other words, I connected my methodological choices, tools, and analysis procedures with the explicit purpose to expose systemic inequity for the purposes of increased inclusion and social justice. I also strove to make my methodological decision-making transparent as to thoughtfully interrogate the interpretive lens that I brought to the data collection and analysis. In the subsequent chapters, I will share my findings and present implications for critical inclusive teacher preparation for urban settings.

## Chapter IV: New Teachers in Action: Fluid Constructs/Identities

This study used critical ethnographic methods to explore how urban special education teachers (re)constitute their identity as they engage in everyday practice at their school sites. This chapter discusses findings from the analysis in two parts. First, I discuss the two themes that emerged from the textual analysis to establish the common preparation experiences that the participants experienced (Charmaz, 2006). Next, I explore the themes and descriptive codes that emerged during the analysis of the entire data set. The three themes include (1) Constructs that Endure, (2) Inclusion Gatekeepers, and (3) Teacher Identity as Advocate. In Chapter 5, I synthesize the findings to answer my three research questions including the implications for the social processes of teacher identity (re)constitution for critical inclusion.

### Syllabi Review

Prior to the first interview of the three in the interview series, I analyzed programmatic documents from the Special Education Master's degree program UPCC. The analysis explored ten course syllabi (see Table 4). The syllabi content included course readings, key assignments and assessments, as well as the learning objectives for each course. I wanted to understand how the materials intersected, diverged, or conflicted with an expanded critical notion of inclusion that encompasses a cultural historical dimension, an understanding of community and participation, and a transformative agenda (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007).

Table 4. *Summary of Reviewed Syllabi*

Course Name	Summary of Course Objectives	Key Assignments/Activities	Evidence of Critical Inclusive Education (when applicable)
1. Action Research for Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain a theoretical and practical understanding of action research.</li> <li>• Foster</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct classroom action research project</li> <li>• Written and oral presentation of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants learn that action research is an ongoing reflective process for shaping socially just</li> </ul>

Course Name	Summary of Course Objectives	Key Assignments/Activities	Evidence of Critical Inclusive Education (when applicable)
	development as reflective practitioners. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop as teacher-researchers among diverse learners.</li> </ul>	action research findings	education for diverse learners.
2. Assessment for Special Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain an understanding and practice in formal and informal evaluation.</li> <li>• Engage in critical analysis of assessment issues confronting the field of special education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case study of a school-level expert who uses data to assess students with disabilities from a school/LEA/systems level.</li> <li>• Describe a student to a family using a mock student profile and provide appropriate interventions, assessments, and data collection procedures.</li> <li>• Conduct two assessments on an identified student at fieldwork site and write a report to reflect findings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draws on inclusive frameworks (e.g., MTSS, UDL, PBIS, etc.) but no use of critical theory or stated commitment to inclusion.</li> </ul>
3. Characteristics of MM/CC Disabilities (Online)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain a foundation for working with students who have exceptional learning needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research-based case study based on 10-hour observation of a student with mild-moderate cross-categorical disability label in his/her classroom context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning outcomes include learning how disabilities are socially constructed and situate disability as part of larger social systems related to social justice</li> <li>• Reflect on personal and cultural attitudes and experiences when working with diverse students with</li> </ul>

Course Name	Summary of Course Objectives	Key Assignments/ Activities	Evidence of Critical Inclusive Education (when applicable)
			MM/CC.
4. Cognition and Language Development in MM/CC Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain a solid background in cognition and language skills as they relate to students with MM/CC disabilities</li> <li>• Practice reflective decision-making and problem – solving in areas such as developmentally-sequence activities, receptive and expressive language, and communication and augmentative communication skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read and summarize four articles that cover each language domain (i.e., phonology, morphology, etc.).</li> <li>• Analyze and share artifacts from field experiences that assesses the language environment of the classroom</li> <li>• Design a language lesson plan based on a case study and the specific needs of the student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the impact of cultural and linguistic differences on language development.</li> </ul>
5. Collaborating with Families and Other Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in reflective thinking on their personal philosophical beliefs and interweave these beliefs with the skills needed to work with the multicultural issues facing families of children and youth with mild/moderate cross-categorical disabilities and other professionals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct three interviews: (1) with a parent/guardian of a student with a disability whose racial/ethnic background differs from your own, (2) special educator, and (3) general educator.</li> <li>• Write up findings from interviews and relate them to class materials and informs future collaborative practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings on cultural reciprocity in special education from Kalyanpur &amp; Harry, 2012</li> <li>• Learning objectives include understanding how culture, family, background, and language influence the learning of individuals with disabilities and how teacher’s potential biases may impact school-family relationships.</li> </ul>

Course Name	Summary of Course Objectives	Key Assignments/ Activities	Evidence of Critical Inclusive Education (when applicable)
6. Education of the Exceptional Child and Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be introduced to identification and educational intervention strategies for educating exceptional children and adolescents in inclusive classroom situations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perspectives on special education paper</li> <li>• Exams based on readings, lectures, class activities, and discussion</li> <li>• Collaborative presentation of course content</li> <li>• Field experience paper.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings on disability studies in education: Connor, (2009)</li> <li>• Online resources on disability studies (<a href="http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/conferences/dse-2012/mission-and-tenets-of-dse">http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/conferences/dse-2012/mission-and-tenets-of-dse</a>) and cultural reciprocity (<a href="http://archive.brookepublishing.com/auth-or-interviews/kalyanpur-72315-interview.htm">http://archive.brookepublishing.com/auth-or-interviews/kalyanpur-72315-interview.htm</a>)</li> <li>• Learning objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Values collaboration with colleagues and parents is a critical part of the special education process</li> <li>○ All students can benefit from some or all of their education in inclusive setting and/or inclusive practices</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
7. Methods of Teaching MM/CC Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn and be able to accommodate and modify curriculum using academic strategies, methodologies, and instructional practices from multiple perspectives to enable student success in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching philosophy statement</li> <li>• Written student profile.</li> <li>• Multi-subject plan that addresses a focal student's strengths and needs across five content areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how personal beliefs, cultural positions, and learning theories influence instructional planning and interactions with students.</li> <li>• Practice reflective inquiry.</li> <li>• Practice effective strategies that will support students with</li> </ul>

Course Name	Summary of Course Objectives	Key Assignments/ Activities	Evidence of Critical Inclusive Education (when applicable)
	inclusive settings.		mild/moderate disabilities in the general education curricula.
8. Practicum in Special Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gain field-based classroom experience in placement sites that reflect the multicultural diversity found in special education classrooms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lesson plans and observations.</li> <li>Four special education process assignments: (1) review an IEP document and observe an IEP meeting, (2) review a functional behavior assessment and behavior intervention plan, (3) observe an eligibility meeting, (4) observe collaborative planning between general and special educators.</li> <li>Write a teaching philosophy statement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readings on DSE: Baglieri et al., 2011; Connor, 2006.</li> <li>Problem solving activity on intersections of disability, race, and class.</li> </ul>
9. Special Education Law, Individualized Education Programs, and Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gain knowledge of special education law, IEPs, and transition-related instruction (i.e., preparation for post-high school education, employment, independent living, and community integration) for students with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two lessons or activities addressing two transition areas: career development, postsecondary education, and independent living/community engagement</li> <li>Interview a parent of a students with a disability, adult who was in special education, or advocate for students and families</li> <li>Small-group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources for learning critical theory: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading Assignment C. Ong-Dean (2009)</li> <li>Guest Speaker: Dr. Xavier Mills</li> </ul> </li> <li>Learning outcomes for critical theory in practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand disability is socially constructed</li> <li>Understand deficit thinking and how</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Course Name	Summary of Course Objectives	Key Assignments/ Activities	Evidence of Critical Inclusive Education (when applicable)
		problem-solving activity addressing an issue related to special education law, IEPs, or transition	it is harmful for people with disabilities and inhibits full participation ○ Reflect on personal attitudes and experiences relevant to the legal rights of individuals with disabilities.
10. Student Teaching in Special Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gain field-based experience in a setting where candidates will be fully responsible for designing curriculum and teaching students with mild/moderate cross-categorical disabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lesson plans and observations</li> <li>Special education process case study of a single individual's experience with eligibility, IEP, BIP, and professional collaborative planning process.</li> <li>State-wide assessment portfolio including written assignments and artifacts of practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflections are part of the state-wide assessment portfolio; however, the focus of the reflective practice is unclear.</li> </ul>

*Notes.* BIP = Behavior Intervention Plan, DSE = Disability Studies in Education, IEP = Individualized Education Plan, LEA = Local Education Agency, MM/CC= Mild/Moderate Cross Categorical, MTSS = Multi-Tiered System of Supports, PBIS = Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, UDL= Universal Design for Learning

For each syllabus, I created a fieldnote (Emerson, et al., 2011) using four guiding questions: (a) Which contextual meanings does the text imply?; (b) How does its content construct images of reality?; (c) Which rules govern the construction of the text and how do they reflect both tacit assumptions and explicit meanings?; and (d) Who benefits from the text and why? (Charmaz, 2006). Table 4 references each syllabus by name and includes an analysis, a

course objectives summary, key assignments, and their connections to critical inclusive education when applicable.

I used the textual analysis to develop my interview plan for the first teacher interview. The textual analysis provided offered some insight into the progression of the teacher education curricula which helped to shape the kinds of questions that I used in the first interview. For instance, I asked participants to read the Department of Special Education's Mission Statement and then explain how they defined sociocultural, behavioral, and cognitive views of education and how those perspectives informed their teaching philosophies. I viewed the materials not as objective facts but rather an interpretation of its author's beliefs at a given point in time (Prior, 2003). Specifically, I wanted to see the resources that were made available to participants for enacting critical inclusion. The teacher education program was not my unit of analysis for the present study. My syllabus analysis should not be read as a program evaluation or an assessment of the knowledge base, pedagogy or effectiveness of any course. Instead, it is a starting point for understanding participants' preparation experiences and how they translated them into practice.

This section explores two themes that emerged from the syllabi review: (1) (Un)Mediated Practice: Connecting Critical Theory to Teaching and Learning and (2) Urban Education: Silences and Proxies. This section will also address the lingering questions raised from the analysis that were incorporated into the first interview guide for my four participants.

### **(Un)Mediated Practice: Connecting Critical Theory to Teaching and Learning**

A cultural historical dimension to critical inclusive education frames the processes of teaching and learning as seeped in a historical legacy of uneven access to educational opportunity due to dominant ideologies that pathologize difference in schools (Artiles & Kozleski, 2011; Oyler, 2011). Not only does critical inclusion account for the historical

dimension of such practices but it endeavors to uncover how these insidious processes operate in the everyday practice (Artiles, Kozleski, & Gonzalez, 2011). Inclusive teacher preparation helps teacher candidates develop a critical lens for seeking and identifying oppressive structures that need re-mediation through practice and inquiry. At the same time, these practices are not obvious, particularly to those from dominant backgrounds, as they are deeply enmeshed in the fabric of everyday life (Bordieau, 1987; Luke, 2010). Thus, the process of developing a critical perspective requires disrupting long-held taken for granted assumptions. Thus, scholars have argued that developing a critical praxis in teacher education requires ongoing mediation to challenge and disrupt normative ways of being (Kozleski & Smith, 2009).

A review of the syllabi suggests that one way that UPCC helped teacher candidates develop their critical consciousness was by drawing on critical theory literature. Specifically, three courses drew on literature from Disability Studies in Education (DSE). A DSE perspective diverges from traditional special education perspectives in that it views disability as a social construction rather than a deficit located within the individual (Connor, Gabel, Gallagher, & Morton, 2008). In the *Practicum in Special Education* course, teacher candidates were assigned readings on DSE by Baglieri (2011) and Connor (2006). In addition, they were asked to read about the mission and tenants of DSE from a Hunter University website resource in the *Education of the Exceptional Child and Youth* course. They also engaged with texts that presented critical perspectives on special education by reading a piece by Ong-Dean (2011) in the *Special Education Law* course. These readings served as a mediating tool for participants to challenge dominant perspectives on disability and special education. They made the distinctions between a social and medical model of disability explicit. They also provided examples of how social contexts in education create and perpetuate disabling conditions in schools. The use of

these readings suggest that instructors wanted to disrupt dominant cultural assumptions that teacher candidates may have had about disability to engage more critically in course assignments and activities. However, only three of the ten courses included critical readings. Most assigned readings across the ten syllabi did not challenge dominant ideologies around disability and special education. Given the syllabi bibliographies, it is likely that the program foregrounded dominant cultural paradigms around disability and special education practice.

Beyond, developing critical consciousness, critical inclusive teacher preparation must also attend to the way in which teacher candidates take up these new understandings in their practices (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). The syllabi review revealed that written assignments were the primary method used to support critical knowledge development. Examples included the teaching philosophy statement that was revisited across courses to help candidates reflect and internalize their development as professional teachers. Candidates wrote a special education perspectives paper in which they named and justified specific approaches (e.g., sociocultural, behavioral, cognitive, etc.) that informed their classroom practices. While the program did not appear to require a specific epistemological stance, teacher candidates had to name and describe their teaching philosophy in relation to their practices. This process explicitly uncovers underlying assumptions that drive teaching decisions. It is a foundational component to understanding dominant ideologies and how they operate in individual approaches to teaching and learning (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010).

Another strategy that appeared across courses to mediate critical practice was reflection. Eight of the ten courses indicated self-reflection and reflective practice as course objective or intended outcome. Indeed, reflective practice is a component of the portfolio assessment required of all teacher candidates in the state where Center City is located. However, the degree to which

this reflection attended to noticing and questioning dominant ideologies was unclear from the syllabi review. In some courses, reflection seemed confined to examining the technical aspects of teaching. For instance, the *Action Research for Practitioners* course conflates effective teaching practices with social justice. The action research project description targets “diverse, urban schooling” (Action Research Syllabus). Teacher candidates are asked to put their “assumptions, ideas and practices to the test” (Action Research Syllabus). The project description and challenge to the students contrast with the project outcome: “to engage in systematic inquiry on *some aspect* of their practice in order to find out more about that practice and eventually improve it” (emphasis added) (Action Research Syllabus). The project outcome seems to suggest that the teacher candidates are under no obligation to draw on the critical theory presented in other course work in their research design or subsequent analysis. The syllabus contains no indication that teacher candidates are required to demonstrate the use of any specific critical theoretical grounding. This is problematic for learners as they develop their professional consciousness and activity schemas. Teacher candidates come to their preparation programs with preconceived ideas of what schooling is and ought to be based on their own educational and personal experiences. These experiences have been informed, shaped, and sustained by social processes that seek to sort, label, and segregate students based on difference from a dominant norm (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). This familiar script needs to be made unfamiliar for the purposes of critique. Since teacher candidates are unaccustomed to thinking this way, they need a mediating tool such as critical theory to provide them the framework for troubling their underlying assumptions around schooling practices. Without this intermediate step, teacher candidates’ practice risks reifying the very processes that critical inclusive education are supposed to disrupt. In the *Action Research* course, teacher candidates may conflate technical

aspects of teaching such as the steps in teaching students to identify letters and their corresponding sounds with promoting social justice and equity. Teaching literacy with an eye towards critical inclusion involves understanding language as a product of cultural and historical struggles. It includes critical reflection on the dominant ideologies that center certain cultural practices, abilities, and experiences both in schools but also in the ways that teacher candidates conceptualize their teacher identities. They need to understand the process of learning to read as fraught with uneven access based on previous exposure to the dominant culture, ways of being, and schooling practices. Moreover, the purpose and utility of literacy skills needs to be connected to students' broader aspirations and dreams. The role of the critical inclusive educator is to center the students' experiences and knowledge in their instructional design. This also flips the traditional script where the teacher as the transmitter of knowledge to a providing the conditions through which students can engage with new material to learn. The action research assignment instructions for this course do not indicate this type of deep interrogation of taken for granted assumptions around teaching practices.

Other syllabi expand beyond reflection on the technical aspects of teaching to exploration of the personal and cultural difference between teacher candidates and their students. For instance, in the *Characteristics of Mild/Moderate Cross-Categorical Disabilities* course one assignment asks students to “reflect on personal and cultural attitudes and experiences when working with diverse students with MM/CC” (Characteristics of MM/CC Syllabus). Another example is the *Collaborating with Families* course where participants are asked to “engage in reflective thinking on their personal philosophical beliefs and interweave these beliefs with the skills needed to work with the multicultural issues facing families and children” (Collaborating with Families Syllabus). Here the reflections assignments are written in a way that signal to

teacher candidates that teaching is both a technical and a cultural process. That one's personal beliefs, philosophies, and cultural backgrounds imbibe their teaching practices and need to be made explicit, particularly when working with students whose life experiences differ from your own. Explicit attention to the social and cultural processes around teaching and learning are important for critical inclusion because it can help teachers to potentially uncover their own biases and assumptions in the ways they have been socialized to construct difference.

These examples, however, also demonstrate a pervasive approach in teacher preparation where cultural mismatch or cultural difference is the point of examination (Oyler, 2011). While recognizing that one's one cultural, social, or racial background influences the way that teachers engage in practice, this approach does not go far enough to address teacher positionality. In other words, moving beyond the recognition or appreciation of difference to examining how power and privilege are relational based on the social identities of the actors and the specific cultural context (Slee, 2010). Based on the learning objectives in the syllabi, teacher candidates did not necessarily have opportunities to think about their practice considering the "the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us" (Lorde, 1984) and how oppressive ideologies are made incarnate through their own practices.

In conclusion, the syllabi review of programmatic materials at UPCC indicated exposure to a cultural historical understanding of inclusive education that addresses educational inequity and how these inform daily practices in schools. First, teacher candidates read and engaged in discussion on readings related to DSE and critical perspectives on special education. At the same time, these reading did not represent the majority of literature that teacher candidates read in their program, which may not be adequate in dislodging long-standing, taken for granted assumptions about teaching and learning. Secondly, teacher candidates were asked to reflect on

their personal philosophies and how they informed their practice through written expression with a teaching philosophy statement and a special education perspectives paper. Thirdly, eight of the ten courses aimed to build teacher's skills for self-reflective practice. However, the reflection components of the syllabi there are varying degrees of connection to critical theory. In some cases, like the *Action Research for Practitioners* course, inclusion and equity are not necessarily the focus of inquiry. In other coursework, participants are asked to reflect on cultural differences and how this impacts their practices. Yet, the syllabi reveal minimal to no attention in these reflections to the uneven power dynamics that shape the ways in which various social identities are constructed and valued in educational institutions. Therefore, while participants did have exposure to critical theory, the potential opportunities they had to apply these new learnings to their practice went mostly unmediated. What remains after the textual analysis are questions around how and to what extent participants applied critical theory in their practice after graduation.

### **Urban Education: Silences and Proxies**

Artiles and Kozleski (2007) argue that critical inclusive education requires an understanding of community and participation within that community. Community in this sense crosses the literal barriers of school walls and includes various stakeholders from the community including families. UPCC's program is designed to prepare participants for urban contexts. Rather than viewing urban as a monolithic category, teacher preparation programs should understand urban contexts as diverse, multifaceted, and culturally rich (Buendia, 2011). As stated in Chapter 1, urban teacher preparations typically use urban as a proxy for race, specifically non-White students and families (Viesca, 2011). Moreover, teacher preparation program can reinforce deficit understandings of urban students by focusing an array of pedagogies, curricula,



and developmental psychology that draws on knowledge and research conducted in White dominated cultural contexts (Matias & Liou, 2015). The majority of the teacher candidates in the United States are White and middle class, familiar with the ideas and assumptions embedded in the teacher education program (Kozleski, Artiles, & Waitoller, 2014). Thus, the combination of teacher preparation curricula and life histories perpetuate notions of learning and development that maintain the hegemony of the dominant culture, locating differences and deficits within children. Instead, teacher preparation programs should address the specific schools, community and district factors that mediate teaching and learning in urban schools (Matsko & Hammermas, 2014). They also need to draw on the funds of knowledge that children bring to the classroom to discursively construct new ways of knowing drawing on the array of cultural capital available in the local context (Hogg, 2011; Moll & Gonzalez, 2004). Moreover, teacher candidates will need to understand the specific sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts that inform the way in which urban communities have been constructed and how schools operate within those contexts (Milner, et al., 2015). This includes making systemic racism as it operates in schools and informs the way in which difference is constructed a prominent component of urban teacher preparation (Matias & Liou, 2015). In this section I will discuss, the ways in which the textual analysis of the programmatic materials reflect engagement with its urban context.

The mission statement for UPCC's School of Education (SOE) states that teacher candidates will be prepared for "America's diverse urban communities" by developing values around "democracy, diversity, and social justice" (SOE Mission Statement). Each syllabus contained the School of Education's mission statement around urban education, however most often that statement was the extent to which urban contexts were ever explicitly addressed in the syllabi. Interestingly, the textual analyses reveal very little engagement with Center City's

specific sociocultural and sociopolitical context. None of the instructional resources listed on any of syllabi included materials specific to Center City nor were there any assignments that asked teacher candidates to seek out this information themselves.

In only one of the 10 courses in the urban education teacher education program, *Action Research for Practitioners*, included references to urban beyond the mission statement. However, the use of urban in this syllabus reflects the problematic ways in which urban can be used as a proxy for non-White students and reinforce deficit stereotypes of urban communities. Instead of urban education, syllabi use terms such as “diverse,” “multicultural,” and “cultural and linguistic differences” to describe the student population and their families. These terms serve as coded language for urban communities of color. They are problematic because first they position people of color as the Other- outside of an imagined norm. Secondly, these terms do not convey the relational aspect of racial and cultural differences. The meaning that is brought to bear on the social construction of race is fraught with unequal power dynamics. Terms that would signal a more critical analysis of power and privilege include “systemic racism,” “White hegemony,” or “White supremacy” because they attend to the ways in which dominant ideologies operate in social institutions. Even though the term urban itself is absent from the texts, the syllabi speak to the way that urban is being constructed in these texts as non-White and different from the dominant norm.

The syllabi not only indicate an othered characterization of urban communities but also that urban communities of color need justice. An example of this is the *Action Research for Practitioners* course. The course objectives were that teacher candidates “will gain an understanding of the use of action research for shaping socially just education for diverse learners” (Action Research Syllabus). Yet, the actual wording of the assignment focuses on the

technical aspects of teaching with the vague intention to “improve students’ situations in schools” (Action Research Syllabus). In my fieldnote for this syllabus, I noted that a connection to larger issues of injustice is omitted, particularly in urban settings, that are reproduced in the classroom:

The connection between this course and social justice and/or democracy seems weak.

Teacher candidates can address any issue in their class that revolves around teaching and learning. It is almost as if the instructor assumes that because they are in urban schools- social justice and democracy are implied...The way that this syllabus is written, anything that “improves” teaching and learning can count. (Fieldnote, Action Research Syllabus)

This is problematic because it does not provide an opportunity for teacher candidates to reflect on their practice beyond the technical aspects of their work and their contributions to the larger social project of social justice. Without explicitly defining the way in which instructors and teacher candidates define improvement, it is difficult to understand how these processes relate to social justice and dismantling dominant ideologies. Moreover, it can perpetuate a savior mentality with urban educators. Simply teaching in urban communities is not an act of social justice by itself. Matias & Liou (2015) note the crucial difference between the urban educator as savior verses ally. By this they make the distinction between teachers who seek to ‘save’ urban communities of color rather than to participate in the mutual project of racial justice in education. The crucial difference between educator as savior and ally is that allies work *with* communities of color in mutual respect and humility rather than out of pity and sense of superiority.

Whiteness needs to be decentered in this endeavor placing the wants and needs of the local community at the fore. An ally’s purpose is rooted in a unified cause rather than personal self-promotion. Similarly, the mutual project of racial justice seeks educators who work as allies who

use their privileged positionality to provide support to local social justice projects. For instance, educators may attend IEP meetings with parents of color whose cultural capital may be devalued in interactions with administrators. Educators can draw on their cultural capital to then advocate for families in settings that may discount or discredit them. To be allies, White teachers also need to “critically interrogate the normalcy of their ideology of White superiority” (p. 606). White superiority does not mean that educators explicitly state a preference for Whiteness, although some may. Rather, it is the way that their construction of Whiteness constructs a perceived normative center in schools that is valued over other ways of being (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). Moreover, Whiteness as a social identity confers tangible and intangible benefits to White students and families (Harris, 1995). This concept has been theorized as “Whiteness as property,” where property refers to anything that may be considered a benefit or power source that excludes communities of color. In her study of girls of color in incarcerated settings, Annamma (2015) found that teachers in those settings disproportionately denied girls of color the benefits of ability and innocence over their White counterparts. To disrupt these deeply entrenched process, critical inclusive educators must constantly reflect on the ways in which individual teacher practices oppress or liberate student learning. For example, White educators could challenge racial injustice as it occurs in White spaces. A White educator may draw their fellow White colleagues’ attention to the fact that students of color are disproportionately targeted in behavior referrals across the school. They can model critical self-reflection and examination of implicit bias. In the absence of this type of mutual commitments, urban educators may perpetuate a savior mentality (Picower, 2009) rather than working with urban communities of color in the shared project of social justice.

## **Summary of the Syllabi Review**

In sum, the analysis revealed little engagement with the specific urban context where graduates of UPCC may one day work. First, the specific cultural and historical context of Center City and the area surrounding it was not evident in the syllabi. Furthermore, the terms urban education or urban schools were absent in most syllabi except for the requisite SOE mission statement. However, syllabi do use terms such as diverse or multicultural rather than urban which also seem to serve as proxies for urban communities of color. Finally, the absence of requirements to interrogate critically systemic inequity and educators' role within it portrays the work of urban education as a social project intent on saving urban communities rather than a mutual struggle engaging communities and schools in pursuit of social justice. Therefore, based on the textual analysis, questions remain about (a) the degree to which the program and its faculty positioned themselves and their teacher candidates as urban educators and (b) the extent to which the program framed its work from the vantage point of (White) saviors verses social justice warriors who aim to disrupt dominant ideologies.

This section described the two themes that emerged from the analysis of the UPCC documents. The syllabi provide little detail about the extent to which the application of critical theory or engagement with the construct of urban education disrupted dominant ideologies for teacher candidates. Indeed, conclusions are difficult to draw from the documents alone. Questions remain regarding the degree to which teacher candidates translated the messages of their program to their practice. I used findings from the syllabi review to construct the interview guide for the first interview in the phenomenological interview series of three teacher candidates. In the following section, I discuss how the participants' preparation experience mediated their

teacher practice but also how the teachers' own personal experiences and communities of practice mediated the messages from the program.

### **New Teachers in Action: Fluid Constructs/Identities**

This section discusses the findings from the present study organized into three themes: (1) Constructs that Endure, (2) Inclusion Gatekeepers, and (3) Teacher Identity as Advocate. The first theme discusses how participants drew on cultural tools from their histories and communities of practice to disrupt or reify dominant constructs of disability, special education, and urban education. The second theme examines how teachers in this study were positioned as inclusion gatekeepers, making inclusion a privilege enjoyed by some students rather than a right guaranteed to all. The third theme offers insight into how and why teachers in this study understood their role within special education as an advocate and how they chose to advocate for students and families.

#### **Theme 1: Constructs that Endure**

Positioning pedagogy as engagement with the sociocultural context draws on a Vygotskian perspective that views the ways in which teachers make meaning through engagement with their environment (Collins, 2013; Erickson, 1986; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Individuals learn and make meaning through social interactions and the materials available to them in their specific contexts. Holland and colleagues (1998) refer to this process as heuristic development, people (re)constitute their identities using cultural tools. In the case of inclusive education, teachers have a range of cultural tools to use such as critical theory, culturally responsive pedagogy, Universal Design for Learning, etc. (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). But their ability to use these tools for critical inclusive means is aided or constrained by their previous experiences, habits, and knowledge base (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2012). This historical

“sediment” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 18) mediates the way that teachers access, adapt, and change the cultural tools available to them. The sediment can be imagined as thick and sticky creating deeply embedded habits of mind that are difficult to shed off and embrace new ways of viewing the world (Bordieu, 1987; Luke, 2010). Accordingly, teachers are not wholly autonomous agents with unbridled agentic power to shift and alter dominant assumptions (Aston, 2013). This theme describes how participants made meaning of these constructs to contest or reify dominant ideologies. While points of resistance were evident, overall, participants’ histories and communities of practice did not afford them the tools to disrupt dominant constructions of disability, special education, and urban communities.

**Dueling Disability Models.** Because of the Disability Rights Movements, the ways in which disability is understood has evolved and expanded over time (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011). To examine the ways in which participants constructed identity in their practice to (re)fashion them, it is important to first understand the three disability models- medical, social, and cultural- how they diverge and overlap and their implications for critical inclusive education (Crossley, 1999). The medical model understands disability as a biological impairment in need of fixing (Artiles, 2013). This model minimizes the sociocultural factors that contribute to exclusion because disability is a biological trait rather than a social construct. The social model of disability, on the other hand, relocates the impairment from within the person to the physical environment (e.g. curriculum, classroom organization, etc.) and sociocultural context (e.g. teacher beliefs, teacher bias, etc.) (Connor & Ferri, 2005). For instance, a blind student is not actually impaired by their inability to see but rather since a significant amount of instruction occurs through the visual transference of information such as through words written on the page. This is not to imply that biological human variance does not exist but rather it is the

meaning or significance that people make of these differences that breeds inequity and exclusion (Baglieri, et al., 2011). For these reasons, the social model also critiques popular depictions that other disabled bodies and normalize able bodies. Rather than justifying exclusion, the social model opens possibilities reconfiguring classrooms to remove the material barriers that disable and invites educators to recalibrate their assumptions around normalcy. Artiles (2013) adds a third disability model which encompasses scholarship that explores racial disproportionality in special education. The cultural model expands on the social model in that it is informed by the social and historical construction of culture. Artiles (2013) notes that the extent to which scholars have thoroughly addressed the intersections of race and disability using a cultural model remains limited in the literature. However, more recent scholarship in DisCrit seeks to understand how race, gender and disability are interrelated and create unique forms of oppression for students of color in special education (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013). Despite multiple ways of understanding the construct of disability, the medical model of disability remains the dominant paradigm in the special education field (Artiles, 2013). Participants constructions of disability in many ways reflected medical model as a dominant construct. However, they also demonstrated some disruption of the medical model by drawing on the social and cultural models to critique special education practices.

UPCC's Special Education Master's program purpose statement states the program is "framed by a socio-cultural perspective and the practices derived from this perspective are also influenced by cognitive and behaviorist theories" (UPCC Special Education Purpose Statement). From the syllabi review, I knew that this statement was embedded in every syllabus in the program. I wanted to understand the degree to which the participants drew on different theories and disability models in their practice. Specifically, I asked participants how they understood the



“sociocultural perspective” from UPCC’s mission statement and their coursework as it relates to their professional practice. Sarah defined the ‘sociocultural perspective’ as:

...considering the student’s culture and background and who they are before labeling them. A lot of the labeling is left up to choice in my opinion, like professional decision, like your opinion of how your home is run and how do you think a school should be run and not necessarily what they have been brought up as (Sarah Interview 1).

Sarah identifies the social processes that pathologize students who do not conform to the dominant culture of the professionals making disability determinations, which draws on both the social and cultural models of disability. Participants also noted that variation in identification outcomes across school contexts demonstrated the various and multiple ways of constructing disability. For instance, Denise’s student, Otis, transferred from the Briarcliff School where he went through the evaluation process. Denise described Briarcliff as, “a little White suburb” (Denise Interview 2) where Otis, who is biracial and an English emergent student, did not fit the dominant mold:

*(punctuating each word)* He. Should. Not. Be. In. A. Cross Cat [self-contained] room.

But the school that he came from is a 5-star school. So, their level of expectations are even higher than ours. Cause they have...an upper middle class school. (Denise Interview 2)

Denise recognized that idiosyncratic and divergent behavior standards existed in different schools ((McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 2006). She questioned how Otis’s former school positioned Otis’ behavior as deviant, requiring a quarantined setting in an entirely different school. In the quote above, Denise suggests that socio-economic status of the referring school’s community contributed to how the school normalized a specific set of behavioral standards.

Certainly, varying dominant norms for behavior between school contexts can play a role in the way in which teachers interpret student behavior and categorize them as deviant or socially acceptable (Potter, 2014).

Natalie also pointed to variation of standards for disability diagnosis between school sites (McDermott, et al., 2006). In her case, she noted large numbers of students coming with disability labels for behavior disorders from the middle school that feeds into the high school where she worked:

When the psychs use professional judgement to qualify a kid with an IQ of 102. And we've had so many kids from the middle school and it's all conduct. So, it's like, "Okay, so these boys are out of control down there," so you put them on IEP to get them in these smaller classes and then they get to the high school and you're doing the three year eval[uation] and you're like, "You've got a 102 IQ, you read at close to grade level. You don't qualify." (Natalie Interview 2)

Natalie critiqued the practice of using professional judgment as a subjective measure of disability rather than an objective and rational process. Her rationale is somewhat problematic because she used IQ score as a threshold for disability diagnosis. While she is critiquing behavior as a social construct, she does not do the same for intelligence. The tension in her statement is indicative of varying views of disability/ability that will be explained further in the following section. What is significant here is that Natalie, like Sarah and Denise, recognize that the special education labeling process is at times idiosyncratic particularly when students' behavior rather than academic performance is the underlying basis for identification. In these instances, they draw on the social and cultural models of disability to make critiques of the special education evaluation and identification process.

Sarah drew on her personal history as a Black woman to identify how students of color experience oppression. Sarah attended high school in a heavily White, upper middle class suburban neighborhood. Although she excelled academically, Sarah recalled racial and class based discrimination. Despite coming from a middle-class family, she felt like she could not relate to the upper middle class experiences of her classmates who received expensive cars on their sixteenth birthdays. Even though they were the top performing tennis doubles pair, she and her partner, who was also a girl of color, did not get the top seat because their families did not donate enough to the booster club. In another instance, Sarah was kicked out of National Honors Society after being suspended for getting into a fight at school. This punishment seemed overly harsh since it was her first and only offense and little consideration was given to the context in which the fight occurred. Given these experiences with racial and class based oppression, Sarah feels a personal responsibility to recognize and address discrimination in her school:

MOLLY: And do you [feel] that ...people of color feel like they have to constantly be pushing back [against discrimination]?

SARAH: Yeah. I feel like nobody makes it a big deal. Nobody else sees the problem. And I think it is almost because you have never experienced it or it is like their kids it is not really affecting your future so I mean, 'We are just trying to help them.' Not really but okay. Your kid will never have to experience [discrimination] so... (Sarah Interview 1)

Sarah's experiences in high school provided her with an intimate understanding of the ways in which racism and classism operate in school systems. Unlike her non-Black colleagues, she described how racial discrimination is more salient to her because it poses a tangible threat to herself and her family rather than something that just happens to other people's children. Sarah's

personal experiences revealed how the meaning made of her social identities worked to disadvantage her. The social and cultural models of disability that she learned about during her preparation experiences linked to her history making them highly salient to her own development as a teacher advocate.

Anna also discussed how her experiences as a gay woman prepared her to understand difference in a more complex way:

I think I was in a better position than some of the people that I might have been in class [at UPCC] with because of how I was brought up and my experiences growing up...And I'm gay even though as a white person but I'm also a woman which it makes you see the world in a different way. (Anna Interview 1)

Anna attested that she was better suited to connecting with her students with disability labels because she herself has experience at the intersection of multiple, marginalized identities. These experiences have influence her to be more accepting and accommodating. As a teacher, she strives to “make people feel welcome and not just tolerated but accepted and part of community” (Anna Interview 1). This welcoming approach was certainly evident in the interactions that I observed Anna’s classroom community. Anna consistently used positive affirmations with her students telling them that they were bright, funny, and creative. Anna also demonstrated her commitment to creating a more inclusive school in her interactions with colleagues. During the course of this study, Anna’s school data demonstrated that students of color were over represented in discipline referrals. Anna and another colleague developed and led a professional development session to facilitate an exploration of implicit racial bias and its impact on the discipline process. The meeting was met with hostile resistance, particularly from her white colleagues. In reflections with me, she felt that she might be further along than her

colleagues in her understanding of implicit bias due to her preparation and experiences as a gay woman, "...[I] have been thinking about it [implicit bias] for a long time...And it was like I need to remember back to when I didn't think about this...how it might feel to have somebody come be like, 'Oh you have white privilege'" (Anna Interview 3). Although Anna is white, she drew on her marginalized identities and experiences of oppression to provide leadership in professional development that addressed inequity. Sarah and Anna both used their marginalized identities to bring a more in-depth analysis of the meaning that is made of difference in school settings.

Despite participants' critiques of the identification process, tensions emerged between participants' varying constructions of disability. While participants did draw on the social and cultural models of disability when it came to subjective disabilities like behavior, they drew on the medical model of disability when the diagnosis pertained to student IQ score or academic performance. In Natalie's previous quote, she explained that students with an IQ score of 102 should not qualify for special education because it is too high. A corollary to that belief is that there is an IQ level that would qualify for special education. The distinction here is that Natalie understands IQ scores as a rational and fair method for determining whether a person has a disability. Similarly, in the previous example with Denise's student, Otis, she singled out his diagnosis as inappropriate because he performs on grade level academically. However, in doing so, she maintained that her other students' diagnoses are real because they do not meet grade-level benchmarks for academic performance.

Sarah made a similar distinction during my first participant observation in her class with her student, Maurice. Despite Sarah's attempts to entice Maurice into completing his work, he silently refused. In frustration, she placed a post-it note on the desk next to me that read,

“example of ED [Emotional Disturbance] vs. conduct” (Sarah, Participant Observation 1 Fieldnote). In this note, Sarah referenced to our first interview where she distinguished between her students who had a “true ED diagnosis” (Sarah Interview 1) those who, like Maurice, have autonomy over their behavior. Sarah’s distinction here echoes the distinction made in IDEA between Emotional or Behavioral Disorders (EBD) and social maladjustment (SM). The social maladjustment clause distinguishes SM from EBD as children and youth who present problem behaviors that are purposeful and goal-oriented (Merrell & Walker, 2004). Students with EBD on the other hand do not necessarily have control over their challenging behaviors. The implications of this distinction are that students with EBD labels are eligible for special education services and protections, while students considered socially maladjusted are not. The federal law was written broadly and left it up to states and LEAs to make the determination between EBD and SM. In Sarah’s context, the distinction between EBD and SM, or conduct issue, play a significant role in the way she constructs disability. Not only does she see Maurice as in control of his behavior and thus making a conscious choice to misbehave, but she also sees those choices as harmful to her other students. Interestingly, Sarah perceives Maurice’s inappropriate placement in her classroom as more detrimental to her students with “true” disability labels instead of Maurice because his behavior impedes her ability to provide services that she believes they need. I wrote about Sarah’s and Maurice’s relationship after my first participant observation:

It is interesting the divide that Sarah sees between Maurice and the other students.

Maurice is Black, with two other White students and another Black child. Sarah has described Maurice as literally older (he has been held back twice and physically much taller than the other kids) but also has more life experience. Sarah considers this

experience negative as she describes Maurice's participation in gang activity, sex, etc.

She views him as a negative influence on the other students, whom she sees are more innocent than him. She feels a need to protect them from his poor influence and had them [the other students] leave the room so they would not see his behavior and be influenced by it. (Sarah Participant Observation 1)

In our second interview, I followed up on this observation and I asked Sarah about the different ways she views Maurice's diagnosis and behavior from her other students and she said:

I use the saying, 'It's okay if you don't want to learn but you can't take that from everybody else.' You're fifteen. You are old enough to make some kind of decision so if you want to do nothing, then you chose to do nothing but at the expense of everybody else and at the expense of the classroom culture, it is not okay with me. Because he creates a culture that you can do anything and get away with it...He creates a culture of 'They think it's okay' because he does it. (Sarah Interview 2)

Sarah does not see Maurice's placement in her room as a social injustice for him but rather one for her other students with "true" disabilities. In this way, Sarah socially constructs Maurice as a social deviant who contaminates the learning environment for the younger, more innocent, and mostly White students who have what she considers to be real disabilities.

The distinction that participants made between real and constructed disabilities is significant when it comes to inclusive education because it echoed aspects of the medical model where biological impairments justify the exclusion of people with disabilities for the purposes of rehabilitation (Artiles, 2013). Indeed, the participants believe that students with 'real' disabilities can benefit from the resources and services afforded by the self-contained classroom. However, the participants do not do so in a vacuum. They draw on the resources available to them to assess

ability and/or disability such as IQ tests and grade level standards, which are rooted in dominant assumptions around normalcy. As Luke (2010) explains the school ethos, available pedagogical materials, and teachers' understandings of their students' lives collude to create a hierarchy of academic performance. Participants also drew on the resources available to them from their training which included multiple models of disability and particularly the unquestioning use of medical model through special education practices and tools. Indeed, agency does not reside in the person but the material resources that allow them to act upon their understandings (Ashton, 2013). Therefore, the participants' preparation and community of practice did not afford them the resources to disrupt the medical model and its dominance in special education practices.

**Special Education/Inclusion Paradoxes.** Connor and Ferri (2007) pinpoint an inherent paradox of special education is “the dual desire to ensure access to specialized services and individualized education, while guaranteeing great access to the least restrictive educational setting” (p. 66). School organizations are designed to segregate and sort students based on difference (Skrtic, 1995). Even if students are physically included, when difference is devalued, modification to the curriculum can lead to material being watered down or oversimplified (Baglieri, & Knopf, 2004). Since teachers overall have not socialized to value difference as a tool for enriching instruction, the provision of specialized and individualized instruction in the general education setting can be challenging to many teachers. This paradox is reflected in the attitudes of special education teachers who view the lived reality of inclusion as a compromise or trade-off (Lavani, 2013). In a qualitative study on special educators' attitudes around inclusion, Lavani (2013) found that participants viewed inclusion as having social-emotional benefits to students but at the expense of academic content learning.



Participants in the present study expressed similar tensions between creating opportunities for inclusion and supporting students in segregated settings. Sarah, in particular, worried about having her students completely immersed in the general education classroom. During my observations in her self-contained room, Sarah embedded frequent positive behavior supports in her instruction. For instance, at the end of each period Sarah blocked off a few minutes of break time for students that completed the assignment of the day. When I observed, students used the break time to buy a snack with “cash” they had earned for good behavior and look up Chance the Rapper hats on Sarah’s laptop. Sarah worried that the students will get acclimated to these types of supports which will impede them in general education settings, “I mean sometimes it kinda scares me to think about them totally released [to general education] because it scares me that they won’t have the support” (Sarah Interview 2). The supports that she used for her students may not prepare students for increased inclusive opportunities and, to Sarah, built an argument for exclusion. As a result, Sarah admitted that she hesitated to graduate her students from special education and have them participate in inclusive classes.

Denise and Anna also felt the tension between inclusion in general education classrooms with larger teacher/student ratios and the possible benefits of smaller settings with more opportunity to receive targeted instruction. Anna’s student, Byron, is an exuberant and talkative third grader. According to Anna, Byron “has lots of really great ideas. His imagination is amazing” (Anna Interview 2). Yet, Anna believes that Byron needs a smaller and more intensive setting to help support him with word decoding:

But there are still some things that just don't make sense for him...I still have to do things like, "Okay, can you decode that?" [chuckle]...Because some of those ideas [in the general education class] are still just too much. (Anna Interview 2)

Anna's school uses the Fountas and Pinnel (F&P) Reading levels to determine reading ability. In this assessment students read leveled books (A-Z) with increasing levels of complexity for decoding and comprehension, with decoding being essential for passing the lower levels. At the time of this study, Byron read at an A level even though as a third grader he was supposed to be reading around levels N-P. Anna's administrator's non-negotiable expectation for her faculty is that "every single kid grows" (Anna Administrator Interview). Since the F&P assessment is the indicator through which Byron's reading growth will be measured, Anna's success as an educator is thus predicated on helping Byron develop decoding skills.

When I observed them for the second time, the lesson focused on breaking down sight words. Students wrote words on the table that doubled as a White board. Anna said that although she has worked on sight words for months, Byron still has difficulty recalling them while reading. To me, the lesson seemed tedious and often confusing. Anna had students break down sight words into segments but sight words are not actually decodable. She recognized that it is not the most engaging topic but she said, "he's just so low right now with some of this skills that there is nothing that is interesting about them" (Anna Interview 2). Because decoding is considered a necessary component of reading development, Anna felt that Byron's segregation from his peers was beneficial to his learning.

My observations of Denise's classroom revealed one-on-one as the primary mode of instruction to provide intensive academic supports and to sustain student engagement. When I asked her about this mode of instruction being a barrier to inclusion she initially argued that her students' needs necessitated a segregated setting:

Well I think where the challenge comes in to do...full inclusion is that the kids I have this year are really one-on-one instruction. For a greater part of the day. They're not, they

don't have the self-regulation skills to independently work in a large group. (Denise Interview 2)

However, when I pushed her to reconsider the systemic barriers that preclude her students to participating in the general education setting even with their pervasive needs, she expressed a more optimistic perspective:

Now could they, if they would give me like if I could take my kindergarten kids into kindergarten into one class and do and you know be a co-teacher in the class, boy oh boy could we make this work! There would [be] no problem making this work! (Denise Interview 2)

Even though initially, Denise considers her students' abilities to be a barrier to inclusion, she recognizes that different organizational structures could create opportunities for students to receive the supports that they need in more inclusive settings. Even so, Denise's initial reaction was that the need for more intensive instruction precluded participation in the general education setting.

Natalie differed from the other participants in that she does not segregate her students for the purposes of providing targeted behavior or academic supports. This is partially due to the different dimensions of her position. As opposed to the other participants, Natalie's role is to push into the general education setting for most periods of the day. During our video recall interview, she talked about how she had realized that she had not provided enough scaffolding for her student, Tommy, as he was gathering information for a research paper. In the video clip, Natalie reviewed Tommy's work after about ten minutes of independent work time where he wrote information from internet sources onto notecards (Natalie Video Clip 1). Natalie realized that Tommy has been writing all the information down word for word instead of paraphrasing.

During our interview, she talked about how in that moment she recognized that she needed to provide Tommy with a modification, “I think I’m going to have to create some type of outline for them to use, some type of graphic organizers for them to use in order for it to really reflect their IEPs” (Natalie Interview 2). Instead of viewing the segregated setting as the means to provide supports, Natalie collaborated with her general education counterparts to help her students be successful within the general education classroom.

Natalie also used her co-teaching role to recognize and address injustice in the general education classroom. When she noticed that students still received zeros even after she provided modifications, she addressed it with the special education administrators:

I said, "I can say I modified this, and they're getting zeroes. I don't know what you want me to do." So, at some point, we've had to bring in administration with some of these teachers, because it's to the point where the SPED department is saying, "What modifications can you show us that you've made to justify this F? Because it's [the number of students failing] getting very out of hand with our kids." (Natalie Interview 2)

Natalie located her students’ learning challenges in the design of the general education pedagogy and curriculum. In this way, she addressed structural barriers that precluded students from participation in inclusive settings.

In addition to the teachers’ preparation, their communities of practice reinforced special education as separate. Across all four school sites, special education was consistently viewed and treated as a separate set of services from general education. For instance, Denise, Anna and Natalie’s schools have Professional Learning Teams that meet on a regular basis. According to their respective administrators, these teams regularly review data, discuss pedagogical or

curricular issues, and share resources. The teams are organized based on content area with special education being a separate group:

Professional Learning Team, the grade level teachers get together with the learning coach and they talk about curriculum and the goals of the standards and how they're gonna meet them and what they're going to do. We never go to those. (Denise, Interview 3)

By compartmentalizing the work of special educators from the rest of the school community, it further reinforced the segregation of students with disabilities. This separation was even further punctuated in the teacher evaluation processes at the participants' school sites. Denise's administrator felt that she could not provide the special educators in her school with feedback because she was unfamiliar with scripted intervention curriculum, "When you are running a scripted program, I mean I feel like that's [her ability to give feedback] kinda limited" (Administrator 2 Interview). This administrator, who does not have a special education background, perceived special education as a separate knowledge tradition than her own further reinforcing the boundaries between the fields. The special educators noted the discrepancy between special and general educator observation feedback. Anna explained, "They [general educators] get very informed observations where like, 'Tape yourself and we're gonna talk about it.' SPED teachers don't get that" (Anna Interview 3). By fortifying divisions between general and special education in observation and feedback methods, administrators limit the opportunities for special educators to grow and develop in their practice. The separation between general and special education, hardened Anna and Denise's beliefs that their role is distinct from their general education counterparts, which they constructed as addressing deficits through remediation. It also supports Sarah's concern that the instructors in general education settings will not have the tools or knowledge base to support her students' diverse needs.

Participants felt tensions between their desire for students to have inclusive experiences but also wanting to provide specialized and individualized behavioral and instructional supports in smaller settings. Their concerns around inclusion were mediated by the structural constraints of their communities of practice such as the lack of co-teaching opportunities and administrative support for collaboration. The exception being Natalie whose role involved pushing in for most the day. As a result, she provided modifications for students that could be used in the general education setting. Overall, participants often viewed segregated settings as more beneficial than inclusive settings because it was the primary way in which they could provide the specialized instruction they believed their students required.

**Reified stereotypes and colonial rhetoric.** Scholars have used colonial and postcolonial theory to explain how urban communities and schools have been discursively positioned in dominant discourses (DeLeon, 2012; Seawright, 2014). Urban spaces have captured the colonial imagination as the new domestic forms exotic locales ripe for colonization (DeLeon, 2012). Renewed attention to urban spaces has initiated plans for urban “revitalization” and gentrification because the dominant elite stand to profit from exploiting and displacing urban communities from historically marginalized backgrounds (Watt, 2008). Urban schools are one of the focal institutions at the heart of these colonial endeavors. In cities such as New York and New Orleans, school reform movements have been driven by market-based education policies that primarily benefit White entrepreneurs and exclude urban communities of color (Buras, 2011; Buras, & Apple, 2005). Neighborhood schools that are deemed ineffective, primarily in poor communities of color, are dismantled and broken into smaller schools run by new administration and staff. In addition, charter school networks have emerged as part of a movement towards greater school choice for parents. They promise to be bastions of innovation unencumbered by

the clunky bureaucracy of government regulations and union contracts. At the heart of these neoliberal reforms is an assumption that urban schools and their communities are broken and they need outsiders to come in and fix the system (Buras, 2011; Lipman, 2011).

Colonial theory offers a lens for understanding the underlying social and historical conditions that have led to the current state of urban education initiatives. The first are the racialized distinctions made between urban and suburban communities (DeLeon, 2012). Suburban communities are often bound with the dominant culture and characterized as normal, safe, and affluent. In contrast, urban neighborhoods are characterized as foreign, dangerous, and impoverished. Significantly, these characterizations have also been racialized, with the suburban neighborhoods being associated with Whiteness and Eurocentricity while urban neighborhoods associated with communities of color. Colonialism is an act of White supremacy because it dictates a dominant social system which in turn creates a social hierarchy bound up with many social identities but particularly race and gender (Seawright, 2014). DeLeon (2012) explains this phenomena by comparing the representations of school shootings in White, suburban areas. Even though all the mass school shootings in the United States have been carried out by White, male perpetrators and occurred in predominantly White, suburban neighborhoods (e.g., Littleton, CO, Newtown, CT), urban schools and students of color continue to be characterized as dangerous and thus susceptible to more intensive surveillance. Due to these entrenched negative constructions of urban communities, the ‘colonizers’ in urban schools then have license seek to change or fix the perceived inferior communities to make them more aligned with the dominant or superior ways of operating. The consequences then are that the colonized are encouraged to become estranged from their local places and practices (Seawright, 2014). In this study,

participants' stereotypes of urban communities went largely unchallenged and thus they perpetuated colonialist rhetoric around urban students and their communities.

I asked Denise about her previous experiences working in urban settings and how she drew on that knowledge in her practice. Denise expressed surprise and dismay that her former students could not name pictures of farm animals or fruits and vegetables:

They couldn't even name them. That generalization. You know they had never seen an apple orchard. They have never seen a pumpkin patch. Simple things. And so that was eye opening. That was like wow! It was neat to see and it make me really think about how I teach them and how to bring those experiences to them. Which technology has been nice because you can show them an apple orchard and this is how apples are produced. They are in the grocery store but they start here. How did they get there? They had, they just didn't understand any of that. (Denise Interview 1)

Denise privileges some knowledge as integral to child development. She draws on her own background and beliefs to construct ideas about what children should know. To her, not knowing farm animals or not visiting a pumpkin patch as a child constitutes the omission of an essential canon of knowledge. As an educator, she needed to fill in these gaps. I pushed Denise to name other forms of knowledge or skills that her students may have accumulated from living in an urban neighborhood:

DENISE: Their understanding of violence- a lot higher than...It is heart breaking. A lot higher than you want a three-year-old to get but that is their world.

MOLLY: Like domestic violence or like gang violence?

DENISE: Domestic violence. Gang....a little boy who told me his mama had a gun who was ready to use it on me....But that was commonplace. He didn't think anything of it,



about it. He said it very matter of fact. So, we know it is something he hears at home and he is bringing it in. (Denise Interview 1)

In Denise's response, she reifies stereotypes of urban communities as plagued by violence and dysfunction (Solarzano, 1997). Moreover, she cannot name any experiences or knowledge that may emerge from living in a densely populated and diverse urban area such as navigating complex public transportation systems or learning how to count exact change at the laundromat because city apartments are often too small to house washers and driers. Seawright (2014) describes how dominant ideologies and specifically Western epistemologies, understand place through "raced, classed, and gendered ontological possibilities embedded in the dominant knowledge system" (p. 555). Similarly, Denise views the knowledge base of her students as inadequate based on her preconceived notions of their communities and lives. Seawright (2014) explains that certain types of knowledge are privileged based on imaginings of an "ideal social actor, an ideal social being that mirrors reinforces the cognitive, moral, material, and spiritual norms of the operative modes of domination" (p. 555). Denise's interpretations are representative of a colonial attitude that many White teachers bring to urban areas, wherein her job is not to build on the cultural resources of the community but rather impose the knowledge and experiences that most closely emulate that of the dominant culture (Seawright, 2014).

Natalie offered an example of how colonial attitudes translate into practice. During my first observation of Natalie she was working with three Black, male students on an assignment for their English class. They had previously watched a film about the living conditions in prison. I noticed a discourse pattern where Natalie would constantly reiterate her fear that her students might end up in jail. For instance, Natalie used the unappetizing food served in prisons and the prisoners' lack of freedom to watch TV as ways to try to dissuade her students from going to

prison. She kept saying, “I hope I don’t see you end up there [jail]” (Natalie Participant Observation 1). Natalie seemed to view incarceration as a very real possibility for her students. She wanted to make sure that they understood that they could actively choose to avoid it. When she made those statements, Tommy reacted indignantly and emphatically stating that he would never end up in jail. Although I did not interview Tommy individually, he seemed to be offended about the insinuation that jail was an imminent possibility for him. Natalie explained that the district included an English unit on prisons to “engage the students more in the English classes” (Natalie Interview 2). The institutional context also characterized its students as prone to criminal tendencies and assumes that incarceration is a familiar part of their life (Salarzano, 1997). Natalie’s described her work with urban youth as trying to “break the cycle” (Natalie Interview 1):

We always talk about, in here, the cycle of it all, and they say, "Well, how do we get out? How do we get out?" And I say, "Well, the first step is we have to get through high school." I say, "Because sometimes we don't get through high school." (Natalie Interview 1)

She seems to accept the prevailing deficit view of the district’s students and that her role is to help them get an education so that students can escape what she considers to be a cycle of unemployment and poverty in their families.

Anna on the other hand does recognize the benefits of living in an urban community. In fact, she lives in downtown Center City with her family. She values the benefits of living in an urban community:

It's important to us because I have twin daughters and we wanted them to have a sense of community and urban settings promote that. The houses are not far apart, people have

front porches, people walk places...And so we are able to be out in the community. We know who all of our neighbors are. We walk to go to dinner or the bookstore or whatever and it really gives my kids a chance to be in a diverse setting, see all kinds of people, learn about all kinds of things. (Anna Interview 1)

Unlike Denise, Anna articulated the benefits of living in an urban community. Rather than describing the area as violent, she highlighted the strong relationships and sense of community that she has built with her neighbors. However, Anna still maintained some of the colonial rhetoric that Denise and Natalie displayed. She attributed the revitalization of urban areas due to White families of means, like her own, moving back to the city:

Well, I think, in Center City, at least, it's starting to change too, as in the result of the White flight that happened...And as that happened and all that tax-base left, and created the mess that we have now, people with means of money, who are not hemmed in by circumstances they were born into or have happened to them, are moving back into urban areas...And so, resources and things are starting to crop back up in urban areas which is great because everyone is benefiting. (Anna Interview 1)

Anna attributes the beneficial aspects of urban living to a sanitized understanding of gentrification. Her narrative omits the ways in which the gentrification (and its White centered culture) also displaces people of color, appropriates their culture, and claims their neighborhoods as their own (Watt, 2008).

In this section, Denise and Natalie positioned urban schools and students as culturally and socially impoverished and potentially dangerous. In contrast, Anna acknowledged the social and cultural value within urban communities. However, she still used colonial rhetoric to describe how the presence of White, middle class community members could infuse urban communities

with better resources. In these examples, participants drew on dominant stereotypes of urban communities that largely went unchallenged in their preparation experiences.

**Summarizing theme 1.** Theme 1 investigated how participants drew on the cultural resources of their histories to engage in heuristic development and (re)constitute their teacher identities in their practice sites. At times, participants challenged dominant ideologies. For instance, they drew on their knowledge of the social and cultural models of disability from their preparation experiences to critique the identification process. However, they predominantly reified dominant constructions of disability, special education, and urban education in their practice. The tools available to participants from their preparation and communities of practice were not sufficient to create a deep, sustained disruption of their habitual modes of thinking.

## **Theme 2: Inclusion Gatekeepers**

Critical inclusive education should be distinguished from approaches to inclusion that do not critically examine and seek to dismantle dominant ideologies that perpetuate exclusion. In summary, critical inclusion brings historical legacies of power and oppression to the fore, accounts for local contexts, and promotes fundamental changes to education systems (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). Waitoller and Thorius (2015) argue that current education policies “‘hopscoched’ their way through inclusive education reform” (p. 24). By this they mean that policy draws on elements of inclusive education but do not fundamentally seek to shift educational processes to redistribute justice. They suggest policies should draw on multiple tools such as Response to Intervention, Universal Design for Learning, and Critical Multiculturalism (Leonardo, 2005) to redistribute all students’ access to quality instruction, general education curriculum and social interaction with their peers. Similarly, to the issues raised in the literature around education policy, participants’ preparation experiences and practice contexts

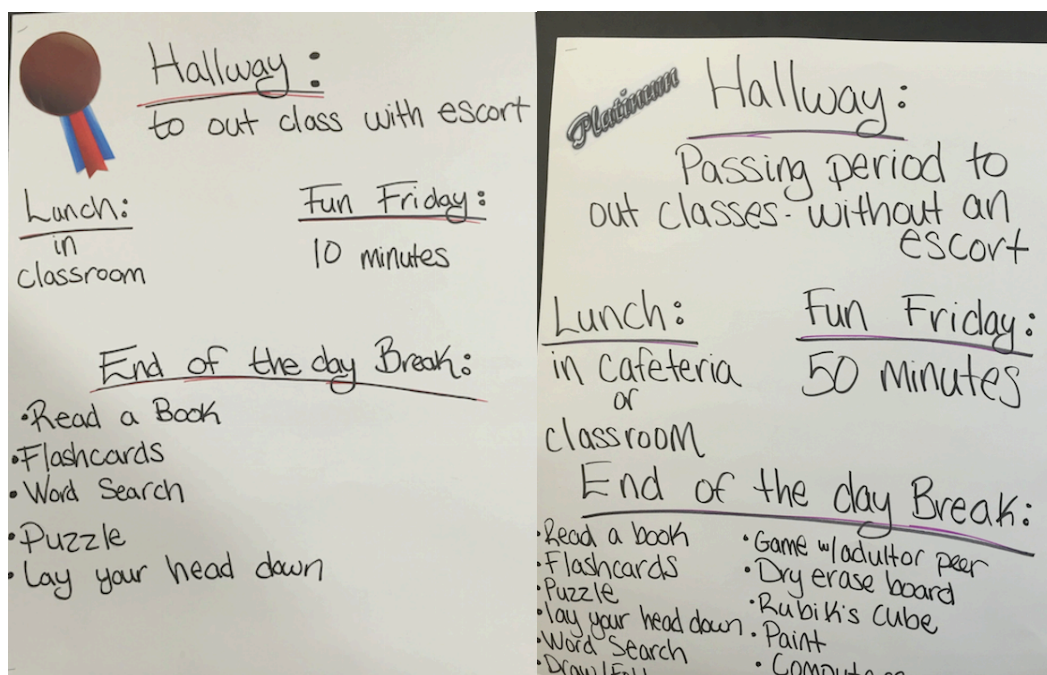
‘hopscotched’ over essential elements of critical inclusion such as full inclusion. While full inclusion without the application of critical theory cannot disrupt dominant ideologies, it is an essential component of critical inclusion that requires new imaginings of what education can be. Even with uneven levels of commitment to full inclusion as an ideal, the teachers in this study challenged dominant ideologies at times to further an inclusive agenda. So, while they did indeed ‘hopscotch’ over full inclusion, at other times they jumped right in with both feet. In this theme, I explore how teachers were positioned as the gatekeepers of inclusive opportunities and how this produces unequal access to equitable educational experiences.

**Playing inclusion ‘hopscotch.’** Critical inclusion as defined in this project draws on scholarly work that attends to the margins of education systems where students who do not fulfill normative expectation of schools are pushed and contained (Artiles, Kozleski, & Waitoller, 2011; Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). While not wholly sufficient for addressing education inequity and exclusion, the redistribution (Fraser, 2008) of opportunities for full participation in the general education setting is a crucial component in envisioning a socially just approach to schooling (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). Indeed, full inclusion is an essential component of critical inclusion because it is an impetus for disrupting normative ways of being. The appropriateness of full inclusion remains controversial in the field of special education (Connor & Ferri, 2007) particularly for professionals concerned with high incidence disabilities (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2007). The divide comes from differing priorities in educating students with disabilities. Perspectives that seek to preserve the continuum of placements for students with disabilities argue that students with high incidence disabilities learn best from specialized, targeted academic instruction can best be administered in a smaller setting with a specially trained teacher (e.g., Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; McLeskey & Waldron,

2011). On the other side of the argument, full inclusionists are most often concerned with students with more extensive learning needs and their opportunities to interact with their non-disabled peers (e.g., Kurth, Morningstar, & Kozleski, 2014; Shogren, McCart, Lyon, & Sailor, 2015). Critical inclusive education is certainly concerned with the question, inclusion into what? (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Connor & Ferri, 2007). All students deserve quality instruction and teachers. Merely placing students in the general education setting without attention to systems of oppression will only reproduce educational inequity (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). It demands that students receive quality instruction *and* opportunities for authentic interaction with non/disabled peers-not just one or the other. Critical inclusion is not finite or static but rather an ongoing and iterative cycle of critical reflection, systemic disruption, and transformation. Yet, without a commitment to full inclusion, the established norms of operation have little incentive to change. Through the process of full inclusion along with critical analysis of oppressive structures, school systems can begin to (re)imagine teaching and learning for all.

The debate between full inclusion and a continuum of services is further complicated by the fact that Law 94-142 is ambiguous on the “least restrictive environment” mandate (Artiles, et al., 2007). Least restrictive environment as defined by as inclusion in the general education setting to the fullest extent possible while ensuring a fair and appropriate education. Given the ambiguity of the legal wording, judges have not interpreted least restrictive environment as a mandate for full inclusion. Even though most students with disabilities today do have meaningful and frequent contact with their peers, the continuum of services remains intact in many US schools (Kurth et al., 2014)-including the four school sites in this study. The uneven commitments to inclusion both within the field of special education, preparation experiences, and in local school agencies mediated participants’ enactment of inclusion. While participants in this

study valued inclusion as an ideal, their practices made opportunities for inclusion conditional. In other words, students needed to demonstrate normative standards of behavioral and academic proficiency to earn inclusive experiences. In this section, I argue that participants constructed identities as special educators as the gatekeepers of inclusive opportunities. This game of inclusive hopscotch had some of the trappings of inclusive practice but did not actualize the “all.”



Panel 1. Bronze (lowest level).

Panel 2. Platinum (highest level)

*Figure 5.* Sarah's Behavior System. This figure shows the differing benefits students receive based on their position in Sarah's behavior system.

Figure 5 displays the two polar ends of Sarah's behavior management system which she displayed on the walls of her classroom. Each day students earned points that determined what “level” they are on based on a hierarchy of precious metals with bronze being the lowest level (Panel 1) and platinum being the highest (Panel 2). The levels had certain privileges associated with them as indicated in the Figure 5. On the bronze level students must walk with an adult

escort in the hallway, while at platinum they walk independently. In addition, students on the lower levels must eat lunch in the self-contained classroom while at the higher levels, they could choose to eat either in the classroom or in the cafeteria with their peers.

During my observations, students tried to avoid the social stigma of walking with escorts in the hallway. In one example, I noticed Maurice lingering under the threshold of the self-contained room's threshold as he waited for an instructional assistant to come and escort him. As the hallway filled with the buzz of middle schoolers, Maurice inched his way out ever so slightly as to physically place himself in the hubbub of the passing period. During the second observation I video recorded an interaction between Dave and Sarah where he protested having an escort:

SARAH: Dave, you have to wait for somebody to escort you.

DAVE: Aw, do I have to have an escort?

SARAH: Yes.

DAVE: Could you just stand there and watch me?

SARAH: No.

DAVE: Oh, come on! I don't want to! (Sarah Video Clip Dave Resists Escort)

Although I did not interview students, these observations indicate that both Dave and Maurice resisted walking in the hallway with an escort. Maurice appeared as if he was pushing the boundaries of how far he could physically insert himself into the social activity of the school without Sarah's noticing. Dave tried to modify the escort system so that he could be watched but not physically move with an adult. In both cases, the students wanted to pass in the hallways unassisted. Being able to socialize with peers in authentic ways is an important part of being included in the school community (Hall, 2009) but in this behavior system students on the lower levels do not have access to socialization with their peers. I asked Sarah about why she



implemented this policy that limits students' freedom to move about the school and she cited safety as the main reason:

SARAH: Extreme physical behavior. Like it is unsafe to even walk in the halls so it is very limited when they can walk through the halls. I don't think that is ableism. I think those are just safety concerns so yeah.

MOLLY: So, you don't think there are reasonable accommodations that could be put in place to allow them to be safe?

SARAH: No. We tried. And they got really scary... We can't go to art because you might try to stab me. We can't go to music because you might break an instrument. Like every single thing, we tried there is something in there and so that is also what is really hard.

(Sarah Interview 2)

In this example, Sarah used student safety to justify the practice of using hallway escorts. However, since students' level status and hallway privileges change or should change from day to day, the justification appears weak. If she felt that her students did pose a threat to themselves and the school community, then the students would never walk in the halls independently. Given the students' reactions, it may be that the purpose of the escort system is to control future behavior by placing restrictions on their privileges. In this way, inclusive experiences were used to modify student behavior to fit the dominant norms of the school.

Similarly, Denise's classroom policies included conditions on inclusive experiences. While Denise sent Otis to a general education first grade classroom for writing each day, he was the only one of her students who gets that opportunity as she indicated to the other participants in the third interview, "I only have one who is ready and out in general ed on a regular basis for more than 15 minutes" (Denise Interview 3). Denise looked for her students to demonstrate that

they are “ready” to participate in the general education setting. This conditional approach to inclusion is reiterated practices around school assemblies, “We have these... community of caring [whole school assembly], and my one high functioning he goes to those and my others do not” (Denise, Interview 2). At the same time, Otis’s participation in the general education classroom was also conditional, “So we’re um and she does a three-strikes in her [first grade general education teacher] room. So, he, he’s in there and once he gets his third strike, he has to come back” (Denise Interview 2). In this three-strike system, Otis needed to comply with the norms of the first-grade classroom to earn the privilege to participate. Otis’s case is another example of general educators’ increased scrutiny to the behavior of students with special education labels (Cook, Cameron, & Tankersley, 2010). As a student with a disability label he had additional behavioral hoops they must jump through to participate in what is the default setting for general education students. The issue with this haphazard provision of inclusive experiences is that it did not account for the structural and environmental constraints of the general education classroom or school assemblies that preclude students’ participation.

Natalie’s interactions with her student, Kalasha, also demonstrate the conditional nature of inclusion. Kalasha, had just reenrolled at Southside High School during the fall of this year after spending most the previous year at an alternative school. Kalasha, determined not to go back to the alternative school, had done well the first semester. However, the tide had changed in the second semester, where Kalasha and Natalie faced a lot of pressure from the general educators. Natalie described a heart to heart conversation that they had recently shared:

She's broke down and cried many times in here, and I tell her, I'm like, "I can't do it for you, I can't be with you seven out of seven classes. I can't. And so, if [the alternative school] is where that you need to be, please let me know, and we'll do something about

that” ...She swears she doesn't wanna go back there. But her behaviors and other teacher referrals, the process began... (Natalie Interview 2)

While Natalie tried to offer Kalasha encouragement, she perpetuated the dominant assumption that it is Kalasha's responsibility to mold herself to conform to the expectations of the school (Armstrong, 2003). Moreover, Natalie had come to see the alternative school site has a place where some students may “need to be” (Natalie Interview 2) because it can provide more intensive services that the constraints of her position make impossible for her to provide. Natalie also noted that some students struggle to assimilate when they return from the alternative school, “To put them [students returning from the alternative school] back into an environment sometimes is not the best thing, general ed or special ed” (Natalie Interview 3). In Natalie's practice context, the existence and utility of the alternative school was taken for granted. It was also her responsibility as a special educator to facilitate student acclimation back into the school environment without much support that will attend to effects of social physical exclusion. Like Sarah and Denise, Natalie's practice context places the burden on special educators and their students to conform to the dominant behavioral norms of the school to earn inclusive opportunities (Armstrong, 2003).

Thus far, student behavior served as the conditional indicator for inclusion. Anna, however, used academic skills and knowledge a condition for participation:

They are so below their general education curriculum...I'll try to bring some of those topics in to what we are doing but there is just not a connection point for what they're doing there. And honestly Byron is not in his classroom for any of the general ed curriculum...I mean maybe 20 minutes. (Anna Interview 2)

Her claim that Byron does not have an access point to the general education classroom perplexed me because she routinely complimented comprehension skills, “He can't read very well, but his comprehension is amazing” (Anna Interview 3). Yet, in Anna’s practice context, Byron’s participation in the general education setting was contingent on his ability to decode. For these reasons, Anna’s literacy instruction focused on Byron’s mastery of decoding words and memorizing sight words. The schools’ reliance on the F&P assessment to evaluate student literacy skills constructed decoding as synonymous with reading instead of thinking about literacy as a broad array of skills to share ideas and communicate (Lee, 2011; Street, 2014). The ways in which literacy were narrowly measured then mediated Anna’s instruction with a narrow focus on decoding as well. Moreover, Byron’s F&P score precluded him from participation in the general education setting because the general education classroom was also narrowly designed around a particular way of being literate. Like Sarah and Denise’s context, the dominant norms of Anna’s school were relatively fixed and the role of the special educator was to mold students to conform to those standards to gain access to inclusive spaces.

Participants’ practices that placed conditions on students for inclusion should not be viewed in isolation. Rather, they should be understood through the sociocultural context of the participants’ community of practice. Across school sites, students with disability labels and special education teachers by proxy were under more intensive scrutiny than their general education counterparts. Collins (2016) uses DisCrit to explain how difference in schools is considered a threat and thus subject to hyper-surveillance. She argues that Black, brown, and disabled bodies are viewed as ‘out of place’ in school settings and separate special education settings are a way to put them back in their place.

Participants in this study indicated similar phenomena with their students when they participated in general education settings. Natalie described differing expectations for students with an IEP in their general education classrooms:

NATALIE: I think it's very hard. There are very few times where I feel like our kids are treated the same in the environments in this building.

MOLLY: Can you give some examples?

NATALIE: Some teachers will see that IEP, the little, next to their name [on electronic attendance system] ...and anything that they do wrong, it's an immediate phone call to their case manager, "I don't know what you want me to do with him. He's not doing anything. He needs to be out of here." So, then they get sent to their case manager [special education teacher]. So, at times, I've got kids in here, they're like, "She just kicked me out." And I'm like, "Okay." And then I'm like, "What did [student's name] do today?" "He just wanted to sit there with his headphones and he wasn't listening."

(Natalie, Interview 2)

Even for something as minor as "not listening," students with disability labels were immediately kicked out of the classroom and sent to a special educator. Denise described a similar experience with one of her students in the cafeteria:

Oh, I had a clerk in the lunch room come up to me and she's like, "One of your students opened his milk and spilled it." (*Denise speaking to the clerk*). "So, there's the janitor, he has a mop, can you go talk to him and my student and they can work it out together?"

(*Clerk's response*) "Oh. I can talk to him?" (*Denise speaking to the clerk*) He's a kid in the school, yes you can talk to him. (Denise Interview 3)

In both Natalie and Denise's examples, innocuous student behaviors occurrences (e.g., not listening to the teacher, spilling milk) have a heightened response due to the presence of a disability label. In their communities of practice, the behaviors of students with IEPs elicited more concern than their counterparts without disability labels (Cook, Carter, & Tankersley, 2010).

Moreover, these responses usually involve placing the onus on the special educators to intervene and rectify the situation. Not only are the students with disabilities operating under this heightened level of surveillance but special educators are as well. During our group interview Sarah explained that she conveyed this expectation discrepancy to her students:

And now I have to have open conversations with my kids because some of them are very socially mature. And so, they'll say..."Oh, why can't I go to the restroom by myself?...I'm like, "Honestly, because today I'm not in the mood to get an email because somebody's gonna say that you talked loud down there. He's like, "What do you mean?" When you do something, the whole school hears about it.... While your other peers are doing it, I want you to know that it's not okay for you to do it, because somebody's gonna tell me about it." So, it's like being honest with kids, and letting them know because you're in here, people are going to look at you different. (Sarah, Interview 3)

Sarah's response demonstrated how special educators are worn down by norms that place an inordinate level of scrutiny on students with disabilities and, ultimately, their teachers. She revealed to her students that she experienced pressure to manage their behavior and made decisions to lessen the potential that she may be criticized for her students' behavior. Her decision to reveal this underscored the bond between her and her students in solidarity against the rest of the school. The narrative created a double bind for her students and for herself since

she will also, at some time, need to discipline her students. She seemed unaware of the ethical concerns with her choice to reveal this to her students. To mitigate the additional stress that she experienced from her colleagues, she limited her students' movements and reinforces a system of hyper-surveillance and segregation.

In a similar way, Denise felt the weight of responsibility for her students' behavior when they were in inclusive settings. In her school setting, the general education teacher did not share the same level of responsibility as Denise for designing an inclusive setting for Otis. Denise attested to the fact that when Otis is sent back by the general education teacher when his three-strikes are up, it is up to her to come up with an appropriate support:

MOLLY: Do you do anything...when [Otis] comes back earlier, what kind of follow-up do you have to know why he came back and why, do you do anything to try to, to help?...Does she [the general education teacher] do anything to change what hap[pene]d or reflect on what happened to keep him in longer or is it all on you?

DENISE: It's all on me. (Denise Interview 2)

Denise worked with the general education teacher to create and test accommodations that will support Otis in an inclusive classroom. For instance, the general education teacher sent Otis back for touching objects in her room. Denise understood that Otis felt excited about the strange, new environment so she developed a plan where he gets to go around the room and touch anything he wants for one minute. After that minute, he was ready to join in on the lesson of the day. Yet, it was Denise who set up these meetings and took the time to develop plans for Otis. The division of labor in the school was such that the general educators were not responsible to make their classrooms inclusive. Joint responsibility could eliminate the need to remove him from the class and deny him opportunities for inclusion.

In this study, participants reified the behavioral and academic conditions on inclusion that their practice sites placed on students with disability labels. Students also experienced uneven opportunities to participate in inclusive settings with some students denied even the most minimal inclusive experiences such as traveling to different classrooms during the day or participating in a school wide assembly. These examples explicated how participants played inclusion hopscotch, or in other words, skipped over a foundational understanding that inclusion is a right for all (Waitoller & Thorius, 2015). The participants' practice sites positioned teachers as the gatekeepers of inclusion. In doing so, the institutional processes perpetuated ablist practices that placed the burden on individuals with disabilities and the special education teachers who work with them. This then created the conditions for the rest of the school community to avoid responsibility to develop a more accessible and inclusive school environment.

**Jumping into critical inclusion.** In the previous section, I described how participants' communities of practice outfitted them as the gatekeepers of inclusion making full participation in the school community conditional on their ability to demonstrate certain institutional norms. Even with a commitment to inclusion as an ideal, participants played hopscotch jumping over full inclusion as an essential component of educational equity. This is not to say, however, that participants never made attempts to use their positionality and push back against dominant ideologies to promote inclusivity. Rather, at times they jumped right in with both feet, even at risk to their own professional and social standing in their community of practice. This section will explore the specific strategies that they employed and the ways in which their community of practice afforded or constrained their ability to promote critical inclusion.



***Challenging dominant assumptions with colleagues.*** One way that participants promoted inclusion was by challenging their colleagues' dominant assumptions and normative ways of being. For instance, Natalie felt compelled to address injustice by challenging colleagues to examine their own biased practices. In reviewing her students' grades, she noticed that some teachers failed substantial numbers of students with IEPs:

So, we just printed off a report at our last SPED meeting, and we had three pages of kids in our building that have F's. I think there are certain teachers' names that are listed 15 times...And so we've kind of been trying to figure out what teachers we really need to go talk with about what modifications can we make? We are willing to help you do this, but you've gotta let us know. (Natalie Interview 2)

Natalie believed her students were being treated unjustly because her general education colleagues were unwilling to provide modifications and supports that would help her students excel instead of just giving a failing grade, "When we have 16 out of 18 kids in the class failing...something's gotta give" (Natalie Interview 2). She disrupted this process by bringing this data to her general education colleagues and asking how she could provide supports to her students that will enable them to pass the class. This type of intervention appeared to be a typical of Natalie's practice. During an observation, her student, Tommy asked her to speak to a general educator on his behalf regarding a failing grade. He did not think the teacher would take his concern seriously. Natalie's observation that some teachers disproportionately failed students with disabilities lead her to believe that their instruction is not accessible to a variety of students. Indeed, receiving a passing grade is not a sufficient marker of equity. Still, Natalie's approach created opportunities to collaborate with general educators to modify instructional practices in ways that make educational success as defined by the educational institution a more attainable

goal. Furthermore, Natalie and her special education colleagues hoped to address this issue systemically rather than just as one of occurrences. Natalie's administrator has teachers complete feedback surveys three times a year. She along with the other special educators planned on highlighting the pattern of failing grades for students with disabilities on the survey to gain administrative support. At the time of this study, Natalie was unsure if and how her administration would respond to the concerns. It is still important to note that her administration did provide a formal vehicle for sharing teacher concerns. This could potentially afford addressing inequity in a more systemic fashion.

Sarah also felt empowered to challenge her colleagues in her new position on the Building Leadership Team. In this role, she pushed back against the school-wide practice of 'buddy rooms' and 'safe seats' to segregate students when they did not adhere to dominant behavioral norms. At the Building Leadership Team, professional development meeting held the morning of our interview, she told her colleagues that, "there was no research that proves the long-term effects of buddy rooms and safe seats as helpful. We are teaching compliance" (Sarah Interview 1). Sarah felt very strongly against teaching compliance, particularly because she viewed it as an impediment for inclusion. Several points during the study she reiterated that expectations for compliance were incapable with in the 'real world:'

I think for me, I do a lot of advocating as far as their inclusion on why I think they can be successful adding another class or why they don't need supports any longer. And then, a lot of times if somebody comes into my room like, "Well, so-and-so got up and got his pencil without permission," yet in the real world in a meeting, you're going to get up and get a pencil. So, it's like that fine line between teaching behavior to be compliant in a certain person's room and real world stuff. (Sarah Interview 1)

Sarah pushed back against the inflexibility of her colleagues by making them critically reflect on their practices and how it supports her students to be included. This concern about compliance was also expressed by Sarah's administrator:

We value compliance in our systems and compliance looks like I'm tracking, I'm SLANT-ing.<sup>2</sup> But for so many adults it doesn't look like that and in a faculty meeting that one of you doesn't have your phone out at some point or you're talking with your neighbor. We are expecting something of our student that we don't for ourselves.  
(Administrator 1)

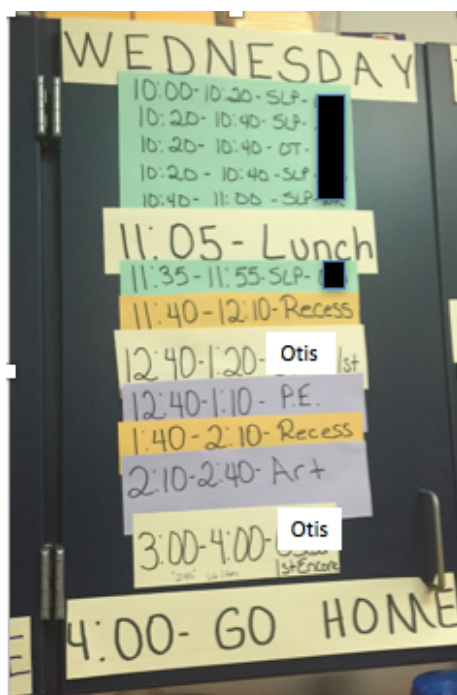
In fact, he had just led a Professional Development where teachers watched a two-minute YouTube video that shows children with disabilities addressing the camera as if it was their teacher. In the video they say things like, "*I have* to move or I really can't pay attention" and "If you tell me to 'Sit up straight' now I have to use all of my brain to do just that." Teachers responded to the video by working in small groups and reflecting on notecards. Administrator 1 shared some of these notecards with me and a few teachers found new insight because of the exercise. One teacher wrote, "If I let go of some of my control on what I think my students should do and look like while they are doing it, I could probably get better results. It is about them and not me." Another responded, "Eye opening, little things I may point out about the kids, like sitting up straight, always moving around, not looking like they're paying attention-may not actually be the case." Professional development such as this that prompts critical reflection can be a powerful tool for address inequity (Thorius, 2016). As Sarah's administrator said, they did not walk out with "many teacher tricks but we walked out with a bunch of adults thinking" (Administrator 1 Interview). Sarah's position on the School Leadership Team and similar

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<sup>2</sup> "SLANT" is an acronym that stands for a specific body language cues (sit up, lean forward, ask and answer questions, nod your head, track the speaker).

commitments by her administrator afforded her the opportunity to address systemic inequity when it comes to a uniform expectation of compliance as a barrier to inclusion.

***Creating opportunities for inclusion.*** Another strategy that participants used to promote inclusion was to create opportunities for their students to be included even when faced with structural constraints of segregated classrooms. Denise noted that Otis seemed particularly talented at writing so she designed a schedule where he goes to a first-grade classroom for writing and ENCORE or specials classes daily (see Figure 6).



*Figure 6.* Denise's Class Schedule. This is an example of Denise's daily class schedule where Otis attends a general education first-grade class for two periods of the day.

I observed Denise at the time when she prepared Otis to be sent out for writing. In the video clip, Denise provided Otis with several supports before he heads to class. First, she reminded him of the general educators' expectation to not draw pictures on his writing paper. Secondly, she provided him with a fidget that he could play with to help him focus during the lesson. When I asked Denise about how she made the decision to send Otis to the classroom she said that she

sent him to subjects that she perceived as strengths so that he would experience success in the general education setting in the hopes that it could lead to more opportunities for inclusion:

DENISE: When I integrate them into gen ed. I use the child's strength to guide when they are integrated and that's *not* what was done before. And I just do it and nobody knows! So, nobody said anything so I just keep doing it.

MOLLY: You kind of do it and don't ask permission?

DENISE: I do it totally without asking for permission. (Denise Interview 2)

According to Denise, the school's established rules around the inclusion of students from self-contained or "Cross-Cat" rooms dictated that they could only be included during recess, lunch, specials, and school assemblies. Denise broke with precedent when she decided to send Otis to writing in a first-grade classroom. Denise's relationship with the first-grade teacher made this type of collaboration possible. The two have a friendship and the teacher has a child with an autism diagnosis like Otis. This personal connection made the general education teacher very keen for Otis to join her classroom. When I asked Denise if this breaking the rules like this made her potentially vulnerable to censure from her administration she replied,

Oh, very vulnerable. Like I don't like it. That's not, like that's not my personality. But I'm like oh wait. This is not fair. This is not okay. You know this is just not working. I don't feel like as a district we're helping our kids get to gen ed. I feel like as a district we are housing our kids to get them through and graduated. (Denise Interview 2)

Including Otis in the general education class, even for a single period, is a subversive act in Denise's community of practice. While, a single period for a single student hardly represents an inclusive ideal, Denise's actions constituted an act of bravery and resistance given the constraints of her school site.

***Strategies for radical self-love.*** Radical self-love comes from Black feminist thought and posits that for those whom society ignores or discards, the act of loving oneself constitutes radical defiance (hooks, 1995). While bell hooks (1995) specifically addresses loving Blackness, showing appreciation for bodies deemed disabled is also a radical act. This is not to conflate the social processes that construct and oppress Blackness and disability as one in the same. Instead, I aim to draw connections between strategies for loving oneself as resistance across multiple historically marginalized social identities.

Since Sarah's class is comprised of students identified with Emotional Behavioral Disorders, her administration required that she teach a social skills class each day. Sarah took a non-traditional approach to this social skills class. Instead of teaching students how to conform to dominant behavioral norms, she reinforces strategies that teach self-love.

Well we do activities about the labels that people the stereotypes and all the things that people think about you like, you're disabled or you're lazy because you are in here or you don't care about anything. So those are all your negative labels. All the stuff people think about you and then tearing them off okay. We are going to replace all the bad things people say about you with something that's positive So how do we take up all the negative things people say about us um and sometimes, we talk about sometimes people won't care to, to look at the positive in you but what can you do in your mind and in your heart to feel better about yourself. (Sarah Interview 2)

In this example, Sarah teaches students coping mechanisms for discrimination or bias that they will experience due to their disability label. In doing so, she gives her students tools to replace negative stereotypes that others may place on them with statements of positive self-affirmation. She even augments this discussion by incorporating the book, *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio (2012). In

this book, the main character August was born with Treacher Collins syndrome and a cleft palate. At school, he routinely endures ablist taunts about his physical appearance from his classmates. During the read aloud that I observed, August's doctor gave him a hearing aid attached to a large headband that would keep them in place because he does not have an outer ear. In this excerpt, August bemoans the anticipated jeers that he will face once he wears the headphones to school (Sarah Video Clip Read Aloud). When I asked Sarah why she chose to read this book with her students, she answered:

Our kids stand out because you are in middle school and you stay in the same room all day. So, I mean he [August] stands out physically but you stand out socially and kids know that. So yeah that's why I picked the book. (Sarah Interview 2)

Strategies for promoting radical self-love from Black feminism involve promoting and honoring images of Black womanhood because they often hidden, ignored, or belittled (hooks, 1995).

While Sarah's students do not have physical disabilities, they encounter social stigma because they spend most of their day in a separate classroom. Sarah chose to feature a person with disabilities in her book of choice to celebrate a person with disabilities. At the same time, August is a White character. Therefore, Sarah's students of color may relate to his experiences with disabilities but not the privileges associated with his Whiteness. Even though the books falls shy of addressing the fullness of her students' identities, Sarah's radical self-love approach to her social skills class flips the traditional script from one where students are taught to comply and conform to one where students build resilience and self-love.

**Summarizing theme 2.** Imagining critical inclusion as akin to a hopscotch board (Waitoller & Thorius, 2015), all elements of the board must be attended to strive towards more expansive understanding of belonging and authentic participation for everyone. Special

education teachers were positioned as inclusion gatekeepers. At times participants used practices where inclusion was a privileged that could be earned by only a select few. Indeed, their communities of practice reinforced this by making the qualifying conditions for inclusion higher, if not nearly impossible, for students with disability labels. Still, participants found ways to push back against this injustice. With some bravery, they used creative resistance to carve out space for insufficient, but not insignificant, inclusionary practices.

### **Theme 3: Teacher Identity as Advocate**

The very first course objective in UPCC's Teaching Exceptional Children and Youth is "Teacher candidates will understand the importance of being an advocate *for all people with disabilities* (emphasis in the original)" (Teaching Exceptional Children and Youth Syllabus). Based on the textual analysis, this course and the law course most closely aligned with the definition of critical inclusion. Both courses asserted that systemic oppression exists in schools and that special education itself perpetuates these oppressive structures. Moreover, the syllabi address intersectionality and the way that other social categories such as race, gender, class impact the ways in which students experience special education. This positioning of teacher as advocate in the program resonated with Sarah:

The program sets you up to be an advocate for children...with all the values that they talk about. That affect being identified so race and gender and socioeconomic status. It really sets you up to be an advocate because you soak up all this information and there is no choice but to act on what you know, about how these different values connect with being identified. And that was, to me, that would be hard to ignore, you know? These things are really playing a factor into being labeled so...it sets you up to be an advocate. (Sarah Interview 1)



Sarah explained that in bringing interlocking forms of oppression to the fore of her consciousness, the program made her feel the weight of responsibility to call out the social processes that shape the identification process. Like in the syllabus, she uses the word ‘advocate’ to describe this charge. A frequency search of the participants’ interviews showed the words “advocate” and “advocacy” along with their derivatives occurring at multiple times throughout the study. This section will describe the ways in which participants constructed identity as advocate and the ways in which it facilitated or impeded inclusion and equity.

**Advocating from within special education.** This section explores how participants constructed their identities drawing on the figured world of special education. I look at how participants’ practice contexts positioned them as special educators but also how participants imagined and enacted their role within the figured world of special education. It is not insignificant that all three practice contexts were not designed to support a critical inclusion. The one exception was Natalie’s practice setting where she pushed in for most her day. Even so, Natalie’s school still differentiated the role of the special educator as the primary instructor for students with disability labels. Furthermore, all the participants acted within a special education systems that were historically grounded in psychological epistemologies that located learning as a biological process within the brain rather than through complex engagement with the sociocultural world (Skrtic, 1995). Dominant special education teaching methods primarily draw on behaviorist theories which sought to mold and change student behaviors to fit a desired outcome (Skrtic, 1995; Pugach, 1992). For instance, the use of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a widely-used method for students with autism labels. ABA is a process of operative conditioning to train neurologically diverse students to exhibit more neurotypical behaviors. The epistemological assumption here is that there is something wrong inherently wrong with

neurodiverse individuals' learning processes. Thus, they need to be (re)trained to learn according to dominant understandings of teaching and learning. The combination of psychologically-grounded epistemologies and behaviorist methods can be barriers to critical inclusion because they aid the construction of a normative center of schools that relegates difference to the margins. The special educators' role then is to eradicate or minimize difference rather than seeing student diversity as a pedagogical resource (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004). This section investigates how these dominant framings of special education shape participants' figured world of special education and their role within it.

***Normalized exclusion.*** One of the messages that participants took away from their program was that they needed to build relationships with their students:

We all used the relationships we had with kids, and what we know about them. If you didn't care, you wouldn't know that stuff about them or take time to... I think that was something that was stressed at UPCC about the relationships you have with kids and families. And so, I think we really, in our clips, it showed how we really know our kids.

(Sarah Interview 3)

In this example, Sarah responded to my prompt during the group reflexive video analysis that asked about the commonalities across participants' video clips. The various clips did show participants and students with strong bonds. In the video recording, Natalie's students said how she was a great teacher because she always laughed at their jokes. In fact, we had to shoo students away several times during our interviews because they kept wanting to come and talk with her and hang out in her room. Sarah's students all sat up close to her during her science lesson because they just preferred being near her. During their break, they all gathered her to look on her computer. Even with her sometimes strained relationship with Maurice, she told me

that he confided in her about issues he was having with his girlfriend that lived across state lines. In fact, she said he tells her “too much” (Sarah Interview 2) about girls as she shook her head and laughed. I observed Anna on the last day of school before winter break, where her class had a pre-break celebration. Anna printed out the students’ favorite video game characters (if they did not have weapons or wear a skimpy bikini) for them to color as they watched cartoons. Even when Denise’s student, Linus, had a tantrum and laid down on the floor kicking during one of my observations, Denise calmly spoke to him and brought him back to the carpet where he happily joined back in the lesson. Simply put, the participants cared about their students and made a concerted effort to build welcoming, happy, and safe classrooms for their students and it showed.

At the same time, it is important to note that participants practice contexts set up their classrooms still served as spaces for social exclusion. To be an advocate for their students, participants understandably sought to make students happy and welcome. Yet, the side effect of this effort was to make themselves and their students accustomed to social exclusion. In fact, participants took their students’ enjoyment of being in their classrooms as evidence to counter the stigma of exclusion.

Prior to the year of this study, Natalie’s students expressed embarrassment in coming to her classroom. They even asked her to put a piece of paper on the little window on the door so that their peers would not see them. However, she described how this changed over the course of the year and they no longer seem bothered by it:

And they're not embarrassed by it, which is odd. Like, because I feel like some kids are, but I don't know if it's just in here. Cause I don't know if I told you, last year, they all wanted to sit away from the door, and they would have me put the thing up on the door...

So, then nobody would know that they were in here. And now, I mean I can have my door open, kids will come in here. (Natalie Interview 2)

Natalie saw this as a positive shift because her students are now happy to come to her room and spend time with her. However, this did not negate the fact that they are still enduring social exclusion. The structuring of special education as a separate classroom, even if it is two periods a day, normalized the exclusion process for Natalie and her students. Just because it seemed normal and taken for granted does not diminish the social implications or injustice of such exclusion. It did, however, impede critical inclusion because exclusion becomes habitual and potentially impervious to critique.

Denise and her students also came to see exclusion as normalized. When discussing the three-strike system where Otis got sent back from the general education classroom, she told me that he does not mind being sent back:

MOLLY: How does he feel when he gets sent back? Is he sad?

DENISE: No...He just comes in, 'Hi [Denise]. Let's play!' (laughs) He doesn't connect it yet...Um and that's part of, that's part of autism. That's part of his, his disability. (Denise Interview 2)

Denise believed Otis' disability made him less aware of the social stigma of being removed from the general education class. She assumed that exclusion does no harm to Otis because he appeared happy and oblivious to it. Through engagement at their practice sites both Natalie and Denise to some extent become numb to the injustices of segregation.

Anna came to see the process of pulling her students out of the general education class as normalized as well. She described how she talks to lots of children when she goes to the general

education classroom to make it appear like coming with her is the same as any other type of small group instruction:

So, for me, I really try and have my students, and I've talked to the staff about this too, be just with everybody else. When they come to get me, or when I come to get them, I talk to lots of different kids. I don't want the perception to ever be, "You are slow," or, "You're behind and that's why you go to [Anna]." The idea is that just everybody needs different stuff, and so they come to the small group, which is also what's awesome about this model, is that kids are constantly working in different little groups all over the place.

(Anna Interview 1)

However, Anna's classroom is not the same as the other types of small group instruction at her school. The students she worked with were diagnosed with a disability. They in effect have been labeled as "slow" or "behind" by professionals. Thus, the pretense that it is somehow the same or not stigmatizing glossed over the marginalizing implications of labeling students with a disability and removing students from their classroom.

The evidence presented in this section demonstrate how some participants took up the idea of building relationships in ways that made themselves and their students more accustomed to the social processes of exclusion. While it cannot be disputed that all four participants enjoyed affectionate and caring relationships with their students, this cannot be divorced from the fact that their students were denied the right to participate in the school community. These sanitized exclusion stories omitted the significant implications for social stigmatization and equitable educational opportunities. It is also problematic because positioning these narratives in this way used the students own resilience and strength as a justification to legitimize exclusionary practices.

***Knowing their disability.*** Participants felt compelled to familiarize their students with their disability labels. Sarah used student IEPs as part of an English and Social Skills lesson:

SARAH: Yeah so, we try to teach them what their IEP is and stuff like that. We haven't done that this year. Um yeah but most of them were here last year.

MOLLY: And what was the result of that activity? How did you feel it went?

SARAH: I mean I think they have a better understanding. I mean some of them had, the one that's most severely emotionally disturbed, kinda took it badly like, 'So you're calling me dumb and stupid?' Um but at the same time it also tells you like why you are in here like how does somebody get in and how do you work yourself out and also realizing it doesn't define who you are. Like it is a piece of paper and we have a plan to help you get better. Like you are not in here for any reason just any random reason like.

This is why you are in here. (Sarah Interview 2)

Like the preparation she experienced, Sarah sent mixed messages to her students according to her statement. On one hand, she told her students that one piece of paper cannot define the entirety of their humanity. Yet, she elevated the importance of the document by characterizing it as a tool to "help you get better." Sarah admitted that some students understandably reacted negatively to reading these deficient depictions of themselves. However, she believed that this discomfort is worthwhile because they now can follow the steps laid out in the IEP to help them "get better." Despite Sarah's other instances of critical analysis, in this excerpt she portrayed special education as rational system through which students can earn the right to be included.

In a similar way, Natalie designed a research project so that her students could understand their IEPs and disability labels:

NATALIE: They do know their disabilities. And last year, we did a research project on their disability. Because I had all these IEP meetings, and my kids came to them, and they were like, “Wait, what?” They didn’t know what their disability was. So, we went over it, and I said, “Okay, we’re doing a research project over what your disability is.” And they all learned. And they’ll say, “Oh, I know that I can’t read. I have a reading disability.” And they’ll say, “Me too, I have reading fluency, I can’t read whatever.”

MOLLY: Was that empowering to them at all?

NATALIE: I don’t know. (Natalie Interview 2)

Natalie saw her students’ ignorance about their IEPs as a hindrance for their participation in the IEP process. While increasing authentic student participation in the IEP process is a tool for centering their voices, this research activity focused on knowing and recognizing disability. It did not critique the social processes through which Natalie’s students came to be seen as disabled in their education journey. Therefore, this practice did not serve any liberatory purposes but reified the system of sorting and labeling students based on their perceived deficits.

Anna also felt that students needed to know and understand their disability and parents who did help them confront their label would be doing their children a great disservice:

They're afraid of the label, I think, and once they go around saying, "This child has autism," they're afraid of how, because of the social construct, how their child is going to be educated, for sure... And so, they can advocate for themselves.... Because they don't know how to advocate, they don't know how to say, "This is what I need for this," because my mom just kept me in this cocoon.” (Anna Interview 3)

In this example, she minimized the parents’ concern about the social implications of labeling their son with a disability. In fact, she believed that this may cause potential harm to the child.

Her statement reiterated the assumption that disability labels are paramount for gaining access to their rights.

While Sarah, Natalie, and Anna believed that using IEPs would empower their students, they ended up reifying dominant views of special education. Minow (1990) describes the “dilemma of difference” as a conundrum wherein stigma may be generated by both ignoring difference *and* by focusing on it. Individuals considered outside of the norm referent of society may resist the services of support systems such as special education, because they do not want to make themselves vulnerable to the negative attitudes and stigma associated with disability. Furthermore, when these support systems are designed around a model of personal responsibility, like special education, this resistance can be interpreted as justification for the denial of support services, legal rights, and social justice (Minow, 1990). For instance, in the due process procedures outlined in IDEA, parents of students with disabilities are responsible for pursuing legal recourse when their rights are threatened or denied. Engagement in this process requires social and cultural capital that includes knowledge of education and legal systems. It also requires access to resources such as transportation services, time, and legal professionals. In a scenario where a parent has an inflexible job that will not afford them the opportunity to attend meetings or legal proceedings during the day, the due process procedures can become stymied with no alternative recourses for parents. In the examples presented in this section, participants reified assumptions in the figured world of special education where students must label themselves as disabled to access their rights *and* take personal responsibility for ensuring that those rights are protected.

***Assimilation into general education.*** Another way that participants advocated for their students was to give them access to general education curriculum. The participants used this



strategy to build access points for the students to more inclusive settings. For instance, Denise's administrator told me that she approached her and asked to get trained in a program called Animated Literacy, which was Kindergarten general education literacy curriculum. Denise described the process of getting trained as one that required dogged persistence, "I kept driving them crazy. I just kept asking and kept asking and kept beating them down" (Denise Interview 2). When I asked her why she felt so passionate about acquiring the training she explained that she saw general education curriculum as a means for increased opportunities for inclusion:

If I can show them pieces that they can take to gen ed then they're not so surprised and caught off guard so when they go into gen ed...My kindergarteners will go during the Animated Literacy because that is something that they are familiar with. I also do the calendar...We do it every day but so I, I do the morning routine and Animated Literacy because that follows kindergarten and my class is primarily kindergarten. (Denise Interview 2)

Denise's larger plan was to prepare her students for integration into general education by exposing them to the routines and curriculum that she knows they will encounter there. She understood that to be considered successful in the general education setting, her students must comply with the norms that have been already predetermined. In this way, this strategy represented an astute way to prime her students for the general education context given the constraints of the institutional context.

Similarly, Sarah partnered with general education science teachers to use their curriculum in her science classes. Like Denise, Sarah had to seek out these resources on her own, "If we [special education teachers] want access to this [general education] curriculum, we go to the person ourselves" (Sarah Interview 2). Her plan was to eventually partner with a general

education science teacher to push in with her class for science labs. She found it difficult to do labs in her classroom because it was not outfitted with the necessary science equipment for conducting experiments. She aligned her curriculum with general education so that her students can easily transition into the science lab in the future.

Certainly, Denise and Sarah advocated for their students by seeking out curriculum materials that could be used the tools to increase opportunities for inclusion. Yet, the premise that students need to be primed for the general education classroom does not address systemic forms of oppression. Fraser (2008) calls this type of advocacy work as redistributive justice in which material resources are redistributed to marginalized groups. However, seeking justice through misdistribution has been critiqued because it does not address the systemic and pervasive oppressive structures that privilege certain groups over others (Waitoller & Annamma, 2017). Rather than the general education curriculum shifting to be more flexible and malleable based on students' needs, the students are expected to conform to the established curriculum (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004). The process that Sarah and Denise are engaging in is ultimately one of assimilation into special education. Again, the burden is on them as special educators and their students to cultivate competencies that align with the existing general education structures. Ultimately, this perpetuates the status quo where the general education curriculum and pedagogy remains static and impervious to human diversity (Waitoller & Annamma, 2017).

***Special educator as expert.*** Special education discourse and policy largely draws on expert discourse that privileges teacher input over families (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011). In a similar way, the practice sites in this study positioned special educators as experts on disability and special education services. Participants then understood their role as a special education advocate to impart this knowledge and use it to persuade reluctant parents to

take advantage of the expert services that special education could offer. At times, participants positioned parents as a hindrance to their children's educational growth and at times pushed their own agenda over the needs and wants of families.

During the study, Anna participated in the referral process for a student who she suspected had autism. The child's parents felt uncertain about the referral because they do not believe that there is an issue with their child. He excelled academically to the point that he is considered gifted. While they agreed that he is a bit of "a loner" (Anna Interview 2), it is unclear if the child or the parents feel that this is an impediment to a fulfilling life. However, Anna does perceive the student's loner status and inflexibility to be limiting in the general education classroom. Undoubtedly, Anna believes that this child needs supports that she can best provide in a segregated setting. She genuinely wants to help him to have friends and lead a more fulfilling life and that special education services can help him achieve this:

Because I think they were worried about him being labeled when we first started talking to them all so I was like, "Look. We just want him to be able to do whatever it is we want him to do. And so, we want to give him all the skills he needs to be able to do whatever it is he wants to do. If he wants to have 100 friends, we want him to be able to have 100 friends. If he only wants to be able to have 3 friends, then we want him to have 3 friends but we want him to have whatever it is. But like you are in charge of this process as his parents. If we do all this stuff and you're like we don't care. We don't want anything. You can do that. That's fine. If we start doing this and you're like, I don't think it's helping him, we can meet again! Or we can just stop entirely. Whatever. You hold the power. (Anna Interview 3)

In this example, Anna strategically used her language to convince the parents that evaluation is the best course of action. She used her positionality as a White woman, a teacher, and an expert in the field to assert substantial power in these conversations, while at the same time claiming that the parents themselves hold the power.

Natalie and Denise also viewed themselves as experts. Thus, they embodied the role of advocate by getting parents to ascribe to their teaching practices rather than working collaboratively to find individualized methods that work for the classroom and home. Natalie said:

I think if that piece is not there, the whole system is not going to work, because if a student isn't buying into the supports that they're receiving or if their families aren't buying in with the supports...If my mom said, "You don't need that, you don't need that, you don't need that," I would be like, "You're right, I don't need that." (Natalie Interview 3)

In this example, Natalie saw the parent a hindrance to the provision of effective supports. She did not take this as an opportunity to examine why parents may not support a specific practice and how she should consider other strategies. Similarly, Denise described a practice of using cartoon face drawings to help students express their emotions in more concrete ways. She told me that you could “tell the difference” (Denise Interview 1) between the parents who reiterated this practice at home and those who did not. Instead of having multiple and flexible strategies, Denise only offered one. Then she categorized the students’ performance based on perception of the parents’ reinforcement of the strategy at home. In a similar way, Natalie and Denise expected parents to conform to their teaching practices rather than finding practices that complement the students’ and their families’ needs and wants.

Sarah differed participants because she used her positionality as expert to advocate for parents in IEP meetings:

Like I said I think it make me more of an advocate for students. Because I get the special education lens. I can go so in depth into like students' rights and what they can do on this test and that test. And so, it makes me I think not just to the kids but to the families more as an advocate...What can I do on this IEP to help this family or what can I say to help the parents get a true understanding or maybe say my opinion is no for something and explain why I'm saying no. And the parent says, "Oh yeah that's a good idea!" I mean my boss might look at me crazy but I feel like I am helping the family. (Sarah Interview 2)

Sarah's critical understanding of the power dynamics at play in these interactions helped her construct an advocate identity where she uses her positionality to amplify the wishes of families. While power dynamics between professionals and families cannot be entirely negated, this example showed how critical self-reflection can expose the power dynamics between in expert and family interactions.

Since special education has historically been modeled as a field that relies heavily on scientific empiricism and objective truth, special education professionals are often positioned as experts with the ability to unequivocally define and measure student ability and needs (Reid & Valle, 2004). Certainly, special educators bring specialized knowledge and skills to the table from their training and experience. Yet, parents also bring expertise around their children's lives that can be integral to the development of educational plans that draw on the resources and needs of the family and local context (Worcester, Nesman, Raffaele Mendez, & Keller, 2008). The problem that can arise is that the knowledge and language of the special educator is privileged

over that of the parents in critical decision-making processes that affect their children's educational journeys (Cobb, 2013). Except for Sarah, participants advocated for their students by asserting their expertise with parents in ways that overshadowed the preferences, concerns, and needs of families. Sarah, on the other hand, used her expert power position to advocate for parents even when it may contradict the wishes of her administration.

This section demonstrates how despite exposure to critical understandings of disability and special education law in their preparation program, participants' figuring of the world of special education largely drew from traditional approaches to special education. They expressed a normalized view of exclusion because their students enjoyed their time in segregated settings. They reinforced student difference and deficit by non-critically analyzing their IEP and disability label. Participants drew on strategies for inclusion to focused on assimilation rather than a systemic restructuring of general education curriculum and instruction for increased inclusivity. Finally, most participants used their expert status in ways that undercut collaboration with parents. In conclusion, Participants' preparation proved ineffective in disrupting dominant imaginings of special education to sustain long term critical inclusive practices. Moreover, participants saw these actions as part of their special educator identity as advocate. Since they operated within dominant structures of special education, their advocacy resulted in reifying exclusionary and stigmatizing status quo of their practice sites.

**Advocacy for transformation?** The ways in which participants understood and enacted their identity as advocate sometimes impeded equity even with good intentions. However, that is not to say that participants did not show openness to potential opportunities to engage in collective transformative work. This observation itself most starkly in the group reflexive video analysis where the participants described how the process of engaging in a group reflexive video

analysis. Some participants described how the use of video recommitted them to their social justice work:

SARAH: I think it [participating in the group reflexive video analysis] renews the passion to want to be an advocate. Like at every semester break, you could go look at a video and remember why you started this when everything's too much. I think it makes the passion stronger, and you get a sense of, "Okay, this is why I'm doing it." Because we do all this stuff everyday but you kinda get lost in, "Why am I really doing this?" (Sarah Interview 3).

NATALIE: It is like the job is so much bigger than what the average person sees. And I think even looking at some of these videos and talking through this stuff it's like there's so much more to our jobs than I think we even realize (Natalie Interview 3).

Both Sarah and Natalie highlighted the fact that they both believe that their role extends beyond the technical aspects of their job. This identity as advocate, while at times problematic, did call them to a larger purpose outside the bounds of special education. This is something they feel integral to their work and identity. They both also acknowledged the power of video recall and mediated discussion in harnessing their passion for these broader social commitments.

Participants also noted that the group design of the interview helped them feel more connected to other like-minded professionals. Anna stated that she benefitted from, "...just the community because so often, even in this building I'm the only one [special educator] here" (Anna Interview 3). Similarly, Denise spoke about how the experience made her feel less isolated:

When I think, seeing other people, and hearing... I feel very isolated at my school because I have a room by myself in a hall. And I could not see any of the other classrooms all day

and so this makes me feel like, okay, I'm not the only one in that situation and trying to better what's happening in special ed overall (Denise Interview 3).

Anna and Denise both felt that they were part of a professional community working towards increased inclusion and equity rather than a single actor working in isolation. In a similar way, Natalie pointed to the connection she felt not only to the other participants but “makes you feel a little bit like you’re part of a movement” (Natalie Interview 3). Natalie spoke this sentence with a sense of surprise in her voice as if it had not occurred to her that other special educators were wrestling with similar challenges in the process of (re)constructing their identities. Even though the examples of advocacy in this study were not always equipped to transform the existing dominant structures, the use of video recall in a group environment cultivated a space for participants to share their practice, engage in a dialogue, and struggle in community.

**Summarizing theme 3.** The Master’s program at UPCC taught students as special educators they needed to advocate for their students with disabilities. All the participants in this program felt strongly that they needed to be “bigger than the job” (Natalie Interview 3) by building equitable educational opportunities for their students. Thus, they each constructed an identity of advocate and acted in ways they deemed to be benevolent towards their students. However well intentioned, participants’ strategies for advocacy overall did not address the larger systems the produce social inequity such as special education. In sum, participants’ identities as advocates did not position their work for increased equity but rather most often reified dominant ideologies and marginalizing practices.



## **Chapter V: Future Directions for Critical Inclusive Teacher Preparation**

### **Dual Identities: Resistor and Reifier**

The purpose of this study was to explore how graduates of a special education master's program with a commitment to inclusive education (re)constituted their identities in their communities of practice. This work is challenging for teacher educators and graduates of these programs since most schools in the United States perpetuate ideologies that provide the conditions for pathologizing and segregating students from an unexamined center that normalizes a very narrow range of human variance (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). As the findings in this study suggest, being a critical inclusive educator is akin to a fish swimming upstream. The opposing current is given strength by the dominant norms that silently infiltrate our cultural histories, educational institutions, and social interactions. In this discussion, I organize the findings around each research question and discuss the ways in which participants constructed dual identities as resisters and reifiers. Identities of reifiers are participant identities that draw on dominant ideologies to construct their role and mediate their interactions with students and colleagues. Most often, study participants engaged in social processes that reified dominant ideologies. Simultaneously, however, the same participants also demonstrated points of critical clarity and resistance. Participants constructed identities of resistance when they identified some injustice and used their position to attempt to rectify the issue. In this way, participants' identities of resistance purposefully disrupted dominant ideologies for the purposes of increased equity and inclusion.

**Research Question 1: How do urban special educators use their knowledge from (a) their preparation program and (b) their personal histories to understand and construct their urban special education teacher identity?**

Dorothy Holland and her colleagues (1998) describe how history in person does not represent an intangible idea or belief but rather the way in which historical residue is made embodied through daily practice. Holland and Lave (2001; 2009) call this interaction “contentious local practice” to underscore the tensions between practice and enduring institutionalized struggles, three such struggles in education revolve around ableism, racism, and sexism and how these struggles collude to produce unique forms of oppression at their intersections. Critical inclusive educators have to contend with these powerful struggles in order to make space for equity and inclusion in schools. The ultimate paradox of history in person is that humans are historical products but also (re)produce those histories through practice. In this way, it is possible through contentious local practice to create space and possibilities for new possibilities even with significant barriers.

**Identities of resistance.** Participants noted that their personal histories and preparation experiences troubled dominant models of disability. Sarah and Anna cited their personal experiences of systemic inequity as a Black woman and a gay woman respectively. Denise and Natalie credited their preparation at UPCC for challenging their understandings of disability. All participants ideologically rejected a blanket use of the medical model where disability is a deficiency within the person and noted the role that sociocultural factors play in making disability determinations in schools. Participants critiqued the idiosyncratic decision-making processes that determined various students’ placements in special education. They critiqued the decisions and rationale for those decisions specifically for more subjective disabilities such as

emotional and behavioral disorders. At times, their critiques led to resistance tactics and strategies. For instance, Sarah pushed back on colleagues in a determination meeting where she felt that the student's behavior may be constructed as deviant due to a discrepancy between the student's home culture and the dominant culture. Denise felt that racial and cultural bias played a role in Otis's disability determination and thus broke her school's unwritten rules to include Otis in a first-grade writing class. In these examples, participants' previous exposure to multiple models of disability helped them to develop their practices and identifies identities as resisters.

**Identities of reification.** At the same time, participants' challenges to the construction of disability did not represent a pervasive aspect of their practice. Rather, they were the exception rather than the norm. Participants differentiated between students with socially constructed disabilities and those with 'real' disabilities. By 'real disabilities' participants meant students whose disability labels were determined by IQ assessments, behavioral diagnoses of autism, or chromosomal anomalies such as Down syndrome, which participants considered to be more objective data points. While social and cultural models of disability do not deny the existence of human diversity and specific physical, neurological, intellectual, emotional, and sensory impairments, they attend to the meaning that is made of those impairments to create barriers to social hierarchies of power (Baglieri, et al., 2011). Yet, these considerations of power and equity were omitted when it came to students that participants perceived as having 'real' disabilities. To the participants, the presence of a physical, intellectual, or biological impairment justified students' segregation because it would help to address the perceived deficiency through targeted and individualized instruction. By not critically analyzing the sociocultural factors surrounding the meaning made of *all* students' disability labels, participants then took on identities that reified dominant schooling practices for sorting and classifying.

The syllabi review suggests that some UPCC instructors attempted to disrupt dominant assumptions around disability by challenging the medical model and introducing social and cultural models of disability. The degree to which these attempts at disruptions to normative discourse impacted the study participants is unclear since participants drew on multiple models of disability simultaneously to make sense of their practice. Theme 1 explored the ways in which participants (re)constructed disability, special education, and urban education drawing on their preparation experience and personal histories. Overall, participants drew on dominant constructions of these three constructs in practice. While participants did show some consideration of the sociocultural factors related to disability construction, this critical understanding was not applied to all students. Participants also felt tension between their commitment to inclusion but also their responsibility to provide intensive supports. Since their communities of practice did not offer structures that could sustain intensive supports in the general education setting, most participants felt that they could only fulfill their role in a small, segregated settings. Participants also reified stereotypes of urban communities of color and used colonial rhetoric to describe their role in protecting urban students of color from predestined lives of crime and poverty. While their professional program attempted to frame these issues for participants, they displayed few skills related to reframing disability in practice.

Participants personal histories also mediated their interrogation of dominant constructs. All four participants identified as able bodied and did not have the tools to develop a deep understanding of stigmatizing social consequences of having a disability label. The three white participants critiqued the actions observed in coworkers as racially biased but rarely critiqued their own practices for their own personal biases. As the only Black participant, Sarah drew on her personal history of race-based discrimination to raise concerns with white colleagues about

racial discrimination in the disability determination process. At the same time, Sarah did not consistently draw on critical understandings of race, particularly with her interactions with her Black student, Maurice. Unlike his White counterparts, Sarah interpreted Maurice as wholly responsible for his behavior and in need of punishment to correct his deviance. Anna's identity as a gay woman made her confident in her ability to (re)consider dominant constructions of gender and sexuality but did not necessarily apply those critical understandings to the construct of disability. Thus, the program and participants' personal histories caused partial *interruptions* in participants' thinking patterns around dominant constructions of disability, special education and urban. However, there were no examples of sustained *disruption*.

**Research Question 2: How do urban special educators engage in present activity through the mutual constitution of the norms, values, and rules of the community of practice and their teacher identity?**

Lave and Wenger (1991) use communities of practice to understand how actors learn through engagement with the social world. Through mutual constitution actors in communities of practice develop a "regime of competence" or the prevailing norms, rules and values of their context (Wenger, 1998; Amin & Cohendet, 2000). Like identity, regimes of competence constantly get constructed and (re)constructed by the participants and may even be permanently altered. In this study, I explored how participants constructed their identities considering their school sites' regimes through the ways in which they adopted, reified or resisted the prevailing norms of their professional communities.

**Identities of resistance.** Even though segregation was the primary response to difference in participants' practice contexts, participants' commitments to inclusion and equity made them seek out brave and creative acts of subversion. For instance, participants challenged their

colleagues' deficit assumptions of students identified with disabilities. Denise created opportunities for Otis to be included by collaborating with her general education colleague. Sarah used her social skills class to teach her students strategies of resistance and self-love. These acts are not broad systemic shifts that will transform schools, they are acts of bravery in that they go against the regime of competence in their schools. Participants felt compelled to take on the risks of breaking with the prevailing norms, rules, and values of their practice sites because they felt that it was an essential component of their identities as educators. Therefore, participants' acts of resistance for inclusion, while small, demonstrated identities that valued resistance.

**Identities of reification.** Participants communities of practice acted as barriers to participant resistance. Firstly, general and special education operated separately with little opportunities for effective collaboration or models for co-teaching. Thus, most participants considered the segregated settings as more conducive to providing specialized and individualize instruction for most of their students. The exception was Natalie's school site, where her role required that she push into the general education setting and co-teach with her general education colleagues. The difference between Natalie's identity construction and that of the other participants is that Natalie foregrounded her identity as collaborator as opposed to special educator. The other participants foregrounded their special educator identities first and that entailed being able to provide targeted instruction in small, focused settings and reified practices that (re)produced exclusion.

Another way that participants reified dominant ideologies was around the hyper-surveillance of disabled bodies. In this study, special education students seemed to face higher levels of surveillance than their general education counterparts when they participated in

inclusive settings. I argued that this is connected to larger social patterns that see Black, Brown, and disabled bodies as ‘out of place’ in school (Collins, 2015). Through their connection with their students, participants then operated under a regime of competence in which their communities of practice expected them to constantly monitor their students’ movement and activity. The participant’s abilities to then control their students’ behavior became integral to their positioning as competent. In this way, the regime of competence mediated the (re)constitution of special educator identities that hindered opportunities for inclusion and reified dominant practices of segregation.

Social processes that reified segregation and exclusion were deeply embedded norms in participants’ communities of practice. Theme 2 explored how special educators were positioned as the inclusion gatekeepers. In other words, they controlled students’ access to inclusive experiences. They did find opportunities to be subversive by promoting equity and inclusion in small but not insignificant ways. For example, Denise collaborated with a first-grade teacher to send Otis to writing class even though the official rules only allowed self-contained students to attend specials and lunch with a general education class. Even so, the regimes of competence at most of the participants’ school sites positioned them as special educators rather than collaborators. Their special educator identities then became the cloak of intensive intervention. Given the structural constraints on collaboration, this cloak then necessitated providing intensive instruction in segregated settings. Without the requisite systemic collaboration structures in place to support the provision of this type of instruction in the general education setting, participants saw segregated settings as more conducive to learning. Furthermore, the regimes of competence for special educators specifically dictated that they continuously monitored student behavior, particularly when they were ‘out of place’ in inclusive settings. Participants then reified

dominant schooling practices and perpetuated the extensive surveillance of students with disabilities.

**Research Question 3: How do urban special educators use dominant versus critical conceptions of special education to figure the world of special education, their role within it, and its impact on their teacher identity?**

Figured worlds are collectively interpreted realms of reality (Holland et al., 1998). Participants draw meaning from figured worlds to direct their activities and (re)construct their identities (Urrieta, 2007). At the same time actors reproduce figured worlds through artifacts and practice. The resulting practices and artifacts can be used to create new possibilities within the actors, that, in turn, result in more complex figured worlds. The potential for new possibilities is constrained by actors' relationship to power and by the tools afforded to them. In this study, I explored the figured world of special education based on the ways in which they drew on dominant versus critical interpretations of special education.

**Identities of resistance.** While critical imaginings of special education were not the norm across participants, Sarah used her knowledge of special education legal processes to strategically advocate for parents in IEP meetings. She understood that there are uneven power dynamics between the professionals and families. She used her power as an expert in the field to help amplify the concerns and needs of the families in those meetings even when it goes against her administrator. In this situation, Sarah was willing to make herself vulnerable and use her positionality on behalf of parents to promote more equitable interactions in IEP meetings. Importantly, in this example figured special education to access rights and privileges but also critiqued the social processes for gaining access to those privileges for their uneven power dynamics. She then structured her practices to attempt to even out the uneven distributions of



power. In sum, Sarah's advocacy resisted dominant power dynamics between parents and professionals to promote equity.

**Identities of reification.** Other times, participants did not account for uneven power dynamics in the social processes for accessing the rights and privileges associated with special education. For example, the process of excluding students because normalized to teachers because their students appeared happy in the segregated classroom. Participants also focused on students knowing their disability without attention to the stigma associated with claiming those disabilities. In addition, participants prepped students for general education by drawing on components of the general education curriculum instead of critiquing the ways in which the general education curriculum was inaccessible for a broad array of students needs and interests. Finally, participants used their positions as experts to minimize the concerns and wishes of parents. Participants advocated for their students in this way because they were drawing on dominant versus critical assumptions around the figured world of special education. Without attention towards the inequitable power dynamics in the sociocultural fabric of special education, participants reified structures that stigmatized and exclude based on difference from the dominant norm.

Participants expressed a belief that students with disabilities faced discrimination in school contexts. Theme 3 explored how they constructed their role as advocate to counter this discrimination. Yet participants understood their roles as advocate in differing ways. The different approaches to advocacy had to do with the extent to which participants drew on dominant versus critical conceptions of special education. Particularly, the ways in which they recognized and critiqued the uneven power dynamics involved in the social processes around

special education. At times their advocacy challenged social systems that (re)produced social inequity and at other times their advocacy impeded it.

### **Implications for Critical Inclusive Teacher Education**

The findings from the present study suggest that as graduates engage in activity at their practice sites, they (re)constituted dual identities of resister and reifier. Implications for critical inclusive teacher preparation then should focus on how to amplify and sustain practices of critical resistance and how to challenge or disrupt identities of reification. In this section I make three suggestions for the design of inclusive teacher preparation. The suggestions are programs that understand the social processes around learning to teach as (1) cultural work, (2) boundary practice, and (3) resistance.

#### **Learning to Teach as Cultural Work**

In Chapter 1, I critiqued the fact that most teacher preparation foregrounds the technical aspects of teaching rather than the ways it creates, alters, and perpetuates cultural practices (Picower, 2013). I also troubled prevailing approaches to teacher education that do not explicitly attend to the political nature of teaching (Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, & McQuillan, 2009). In urban contexts specifically, it is important that teachers understand the long-standing legacies of social, economic, and educational inequities that have stratified urban communities along racial and economic lines (Milner, 2015). Furthermore, white educators teaching in predominantly urban communities of color also need critically reflect on their White identities and how their practices may perpetuate the marginalization of students of color and how they can identify and draw from cultural resources that they may not initially understand or value (Seawright, 2014). In this study, the review of UPCC's syllabi revealed similar patterns in that there were silences around urban education and the specific Center City context as well as

the use of proxies for race such as multicultural or diverse. Participants did not have sufficient opportunities to analyze the political nature of their teaching and its implications for inclusion and equity. As a result, their practices revealed uneven and mixed approaches of critical inclusion.

In Chapter 1 I also critiqued urban special educator teacher preparation for its lack of intersectional analysis of teaching and learning. Students of color with disability labels experience a “double jeopardy” in their likelihood of experiencing educational oppression (Blanchett, Mumford, & Beachum, 2005, p. 74). Not only are students of color in urban communities vulnerable to historical legacies of educational neglect, they are also more likely than their White peers to be educated in secluded settings, have limited access to general education curriculum, and have poor post-secondary outcomes (Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009). Even so, teacher preparation rarely prepares teachers with the tools to untangle comingling of disability and race as social constructs. Often disability is missing from preparation curriculum geared towards diversity or multiculturalism (Lalvani & Broderick, 2013). At the same time, preparation in the field of special education and even disability studies do not attend to race in significant ways (Artiles, 2013; Bell, 2006). In this study, participants did think intersectionality in their critiques of the processes for sorting and labeling students. However, in their own practices, they often framed their attempts at culturally responsive pedagogy with deficit tropes about non-dominant groups and stereotypes of urban communities. Without the tools to even identify intersectional forms of oppression, beginning teachers will not be effective in disrupting them.

Given the number of critiques of urban special education teacher preparation and the present study’s findings, I recommend that learning to teach should be conceptualized as cultural

work. Ashton (2013) describes students in higher education as “cultural workers in the making” (p. 469). In other words, the preparation of future professionals and members of the workforce is both itself a cultural act and the preparation of actors for future cultural production (Ashton, 2013). Culture is not static nor impervious to change. Instead, culture is “a shifting sphere of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different histories, languages, experiences, and voices intermingle mid diverse relations of power and privilege” (Giroux, 2005, p. 24). Higher education classrooms are locations where this diverse constellation of experiences can come together to both (re)produce and (re)form culture. At the same time, academia is replete with unequal power relationships informed by dominant ideologies. These power dynamics inform the ways in which instructors and students relate to each other and how programs and curriculum are designed. Thus, not all perspectives or experiences are given equitable value or weight in the various contexts where culture is (re)produced. Unequal power dynamics in academia will invariably persist. However, theorizing and practicing learning as cultural work opens of space for critique of these inequities and possibilities for more equitable future cultural productions (Giroux, 2005).

Envisioning teacher candidates as cultural workers in the making is integral to critical inclusive teacher preparation. Schools are sites of social reproduction of the inequities in society at large (Giroux, 2005). Teachers then act as the bridge between everyday life and schooling. Yet, teachers are often unaware of how their practice reflects the broader cultural milieu of their context (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). It is important to understand how their practices “leak with meaning” (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013, p. 37). Theorizing teacher preparation as cultural work is helpful because it moves the practice of teaching and learning from the technical transmittal of knowledge to the dynamic process of knowledge production through critical interrogation

(Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010). Rather than only reifying culture, teacher preparation becomes a space to raise questions about dominant conceptions of difference and normalcy (Giroux, 2005). Questions that can be raised are: (1) Which perspectives/values/bodies are centered in schools? (2) Which perspectives/values/bodies are on the margins?; (3) How do I as a cultural worker contribute to the positioning of certain students in the center or on the margins? In this way, teacher candidates can develop the critical sensibilities to understand how their practices contribute to or impede the broader projects of increased equity and inclusion. The following section provides three recommendations for teacher educators in designing critical inclusive teacher preparation programs with teacher candidates as cultural workers in the making.

**Overarching critical framework.** In this study, participants' preparation program had uneven levels of commitment to inclusion and integration of critical theory across coursework. Even though intersectionality was mentioned in some course objective, learning materials made available to students primarily focused on disability and not on its intersection with other social identities that contribute to the way difference is constructed in school systems. Certainly, this is representative of varying perspectives and knowledge bases in the field of special education. As a result, participants critiqued special education processes at times but mostly drew on dominant constructions of disability and special education as they constructed their identities. Scholars in the field of teacher preparation advocate for an overarching commitment in a teacher preparation program (Ashby, 2012; Hollins, 2011; Oyler, 2011; Ware, 2006). A program-wide "philosophical stance" (Hollins, 2011) provides teacher candidates with a vision and purpose for education. By having consistent opportunities to reflect on their practices in relation to the philosophical stance helps them to develop deeper metacognitive understandings of their teaching practices. A philosophical stance that draws on critical pedagogy and inclusive practices

can help participants develop the critical sensitivities they need to continuously interrogate their own practices around equity and social justice. Specifically, I suggest an expanded view of inclusive education (Artiles, Kozleski, & Waitoller, 2011; Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013) as introduced in Chapter 1 that moves inclusion beyond a physical space or general/special education collaboration but also has (1) a cultural historical dimension, (2) an understanding of community and participation, and (3) a transformative agenda. Inclusive education then is not an endpoint but rather an ongoing and iterative process of purposeful (re)negotiation of centers and margins in education contexts. Furthermore, the framework must be intersectional. By this I mean that teacher candidates need to understand how schools pathologize difference along an array of interlocking social identities and the ways students experience multiple forms of oppression.

**Design for socialization.** Since cultural work involves repeated opportunities to contest and (re)form knowledge through social engagement, critical inclusive teacher preparation programs should be deliberately designed for socialization (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2010). This involves decentering the role of the instructor and eschewing passive forms of knowledge transmission like lectures. Instead, teacher candidates are active members of the knowledge production process with valuable input to be shared (Forzani, 2014; Lampert et al., 2013). Participants in this study noted the promises of joint reflexive video analysis for (re)analyzing their practice based on shared personal commitments. An example from a program with a critical inclusive focus involved teacher educators asking teacher candidates to routinely collect artifacts from their classroom such as videotape lessons and classroom narratives (Kozleski & Siuty, 2016). Then they organized joint conversations around these artifacts using open ended questioning with the express purpose of addressing themes of inclusion and equity. Overtime,

teacher candidates took increasing leadership over these conversations as they developed more sophisticated critical reflection skills. Carefully designed social spaces, teaching artifacts as prompts, and focus on inclusion and equity can be a means to interrogate the cultural practices around not only teaching but also the process of learning to teach.

**Mediate authentic practice.** In this study, participants overwhelmingly indicated that the most valuable teacher preparation experiences were ones that could be applied to authentic practice. Indeed, authentic practice experiences are important for teacher candidates to practice and hone their skills to nimbly adapt to multiple practice contexts and address an array of student needs (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Forzani, 2014, Grossman, et al, 2009, Pella, 2015). Still, the development of practice skills needs to be couched a sophisticated understanding of the historical, cultural, and social contexts in which teachers work (Zeichner, 2012). At Syracuse University, instructors coach teacher candidates to critically analyze special education practice (Ashby, 2012). In one example, teacher candidates read and interpreted Individualized Education Plan (IEP) but also gathered data about the focal student in non-academic or non-school settings. This exercise allows students developed a multifaceted view of students rather than drawing on a one-dimensional representation as presented on the IEP. They can then locate student's strengths that they might exhibit in other settings (e.g. home, choir, laundromat) that may be transportable to the classroom. This is an example of instructors providing additional tools for critical analysis well developing requisite skills for special education practice (e.g., writing and interpreting IEPs).

### **Learning to Teach as Boundary Practice**

This study found that in navigating the tensions within their preparation program and between their preparation experiences and practice sites, participants developed conflicting dual

identities as resisters and reifiers. Teacher preparation is indeed boundary work. By boundary, I draw on Star's (2010) definition of boundary as a *shared space* rather than an edge or periphery. Shared spaces are locations of action where people cooperate but do not necessarily draw consensus. No matter how distal a teacher preparation program operates from school sites, their trajectories are inextricably linked in that graduates will bring their histories to their work to mediate their teaching practices. The link between preparation programs and local education contexts is punctuated by the Blue Ribbon Panel of Teacher Preparation (NCATE, 2010) which recommends clinically based teacher preparation where preparation programs and local school districts "share responsibility, authority, and accountability covering all aspects of program development and implementation" (p. 6). This recommendation is easier said than done because preparation programs and local school districts have deeply established sociocultural differences (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). The process of identity (re)constitution for critical inclusion in urban schools could be facilitated by increased attention to the points of confluence on the boundaries between preparation, local schools, and the communities in which they are situated (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). In this way, navigating these boundaries becomes an explicit goal and joint responsibility rather than an implicit process managed by graduates as they balance all the responsibilities and pressures that novice teachers inevitably face.

Another way of considering boundaries in teacher preparation is the shared space between participants' personal histories and their work as educators. In this study, participants' personal identities and histories mediated the meaning made of their preparation experiences and practice. For instance, participants' dominant identities such as their Whiteness and able-bodiedness went mostly unexamined. The shared space or boundary between participants' personal identities and their professional selves also needs to be highlighted and a place for



explicit development. This section describes two recommendations for restructuring teacher preparation programs to attend to the multiple boundaries of their work.

**Create professional learning schools.** An example of restructuring teacher preparation to strategically work in the boundaries, or shared spaces, between schools and universities is the use of professional learning school (PLS). Professional Learning Schools combine professional development schools (PDS) with professional learning communities (PLCs) (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010). PDSs expands the amount of clinical practice opportunities and deepens the partnerships between universities and schools. PLSs also redistribute responsibility to multiple stakeholders to develop systemic approaches to critical inclusion that do not wholly rest on the shoulders of teachers alone. It is important that approaches for critical inclusion consider teacher positionality within school systems and how their positions afford and constrain their abilities enact critical inclusion.

In one example of a PLS, Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) described how each school was assigned a site coordinator who was a tenure track professor. Site coordination was made a significant component of the professor's workload. Their responsibilities included visiting with teacher candidates in their classes and connecting classes or professional development to their actual practices. They also purposefully introduce concepts or tools that help participants translate practices from university to school site. This way site professors acted as boundary brokers who helped facilitate points of connection between schools and university. In addition, representatives from the school can also acted as boundary brokers in PLCs by designing interdisciplinary learning teams where leadership was distributed. During these meetings, participants can help to identify and construct points of convergence between the schools and universities and develop a shared language, tools, and processes.

**Construct a Third Space.** PLSs are a tool for creating a Third Space (Gutiérrez, 2008) in teacher education (Kozleski, 2011). In this Third Space, teacher candidates, teacher educators, and local educators can engage in critical dialog around practice. Zeichner (2014) points out that in the past, school/university relationships operated under the assumption of university based knowledge as superior to practitioner and community knowledge. He argues that these traditional knowledge hierarchies must be demolished to distribute power in a democratic way. Therefore, universities cannot be the architects of these partnerships with practitioners and community members as mere participants. Rather, he advocates creating a hybrid or Third Space in teacher education in which academic, practitioner and community-based knowledge come together in new ways to support the development of innovative and hybrid solutions to the problem of preparing teachers.

Specifically, critical inclusive education can be a boundary object in this work. Boundary objects are something that people act toward or with (Star, 2010). Boundary objects are then not defined as a material thing, though they may be one, but rather how it is used in action to create bridges across shared spaces. As a boundary object, critical inclusive education can be a point of interrogation in regular professional learning teams to merge theory with local practice. By conceptualizing teacher education as boundary work, programs can be thoughtfully designed support the transmission of critical inclusive education theory and practice in ways that support novice teachers as they navigate multiple sociocultural contexts as well as boundaries between their own identities in the making.

### **Learning to Teach as Resistance**

Since the 2016 presidential election, there has been much talk about resistance.

#Resist has become a rallying cry to organize around social injustice. To be clear, resistance is not a newfangled concept. People (women) of color, disabled people, indigenous people, members of the LGBTQ community have engaged in resistance for a long time and at great risk to their own safety. These movements have made great strides in raising critical awareness and protecting civil liberties (e.g., Civil Rights Movement, Black Lives Matter, Disability Rights Movement, Marriage Equality, etc.). And this is not to say that these movements did not have nor currently have White, able-bodied, straight, cis-gendered allies also supporting the work. Still, the political aftermath of the election has caused a broader cross-section of Americans to think about what resistance looks like and how they can make their own contributions (Blow, 2017). In an article published in February 2017, *The New York Times* asked prominent civil rights leaders to try to capture the meaning of resistance. Many of the quotes focus on disrupting dominant ideologies that can normalize and sanitize oppression:

Resist the urge to *hide*, to *click over* something else when that difficult truth pops up on your screen. (Dusty Klass, rabbi and community organizer)

We should resist the urge to *roll over* and *go with the flow*. We have to resist the want to *normalize* what has happened over the last year..." (Symone D. Sanders, former national secretary for the Bernie Sanders campaign)

It's a daily mental practice to galvanize yourself and to remind yourself to not become *acclimated* to this barrage of...people being stripped of their rights. (Bob Bland, co-chairwoman of the Women's March on Washington)

I added the italics in these quotes to highlight that resistance means refusing to accept inequity and oppression. It means countering the desire for ease and comfort and embracing the

challenges and discomforts associated with resistance and thinking how to apply that in everyday contexts.

So, what does resistance mean for teacher preparation? In the present study, participants at times resisted dominant ideologies in their school contexts even when it put them in precarious positions within the power structures of their school sites. They indicated in the group reflexive video analysis that they felt very isolated in this work. They enjoyed connecting with each other teachers to discuss how their contexts afforded or constrained their ability to be inclusive educators. One way to think about this is how teacher preparation can build and sustain these networks as teacher candidates move into practice.

**Connect to (teacher) activist communities.** Picower (2012) recommends that pre-service teachers connect with teacher activist groups who can facilitate critical exploration at the intersections of theory and practice. Riley and Solic (2017) provide an example in the Urban Education Fellowship as part of the teacher preparation program at Western Chester University just outside of Philadelphia. The fellowship was structured so that teacher candidates are required to attend two conferences with social justice and laboratory aims. They also attended meetings with the Philadelphia Teachers' Learning Cooperative or the Philadelphia Teacher Action group. These established groups of teacher activists both engage in reflexive practice and joint projects with a focus on social justice. Fellows also came together to reflect on their experiences at the meetings and conferences as well as address issues relevant to urban education with teacher educators. The authors report that through participation in the program fellows expanded their notions of practice. They saw themselves as "social, cultural, and political agents within a larger community" (Riley & Stoic, 2017, p. 189). They suggest that by introducing teacher candidates to professional networks with shared commitments to social justice, they can

incubate and sustain resistance beyond their preparation. Creating linkages between teacher preparation and teacher activist communities also helps to situate teachers as cultural workers and engage in the boundaries between school, university, and community.

### **Study Limitations, Strengths and Implications for Future Research**

#### **Study Limitations**

There are several limitations in this study that can inform future research on teacher identity (re)constitution. As part of my dissertation project, this study had a limited timeframe for data collection. In all, I spent two to three months at each school site. Since this timeframe is insufficient for a formal ethnography, I drew on ethnographic methods that afforded a deep exploration of the four participants' experiences. Particularly, the use of phenomenological interviews (Seidman, 2006) helped to provide an in-depth life analysis in a three-interview cycle. I coupled these methods with ethnographic fieldnotes (Emerson, et al., 2011) and reflexive video analysis (Tochen, 2007) to add multiple data points that would help to triangulate my data. Therefore, even though the time spent in the field was limited, my methodology provided for an intensive exploration of teacher identity (re)constitution. Yet, future research in teacher identity (re)constitution could benefit from longitudinal data that explores the long-term implications of inclusive teacher preparation through interaction with teachers' practice sites.

Secondly, I want to acknowledge the inherent limitations of the syllabus review. Indeed, documents only represent a fraction of the various tools, materials, and interaction that teacher candidates draw upon to co-construct meaning and learn to teach. As I analyzed the syllabi and wrote the results, I was careful to only make statements which could be supported by the text and acknowledge the places of ambiguity based on the data available to me. I also designed my study so that I used my first teacher interview as a check on the syllabus review and gave participants

the opportunity to expand on how coursework beyond that in the syllabus mediated their understandings of teaching and learning. Future research in this area may draw on a broader array of programmatic materials and social interactions. Additional data sources may include coaching interactions between teacher candidates and teacher educators, analysis of teacher candidate written responses and teacher educator feedback, or classroom dialogue. This type of research could illuminate the multiple, dynamic components of inclusive teacher preparation that mediate identity (re)constitution.

The final limitation in this study is the lack of student voice. At several points during my observations I had to interpret student intent based on their actions. One such example is when Maurice stood in the threshold of his self-contained room, watching his peers pass freely in the hall. To me, it appeared as if Maurice was trying to appear part of the hustle and bustle of the school day transition and to minimize the fact that he could not travel in the hallway without an escort. However, my study design did not afford a conversation with Maurice to confirm my interpretation. This is a missed opportunity to identify disconfirming evidence that could have rejected, confirmed, or expanded my interpretation of events. Another instance where methodological tools to solicit student voice would have strengthened my analysis was in an interaction with Natalie during her second interview. Natalie claimed that some of her students did not feel loved by their parents. I wondered if students had said that they did not feel loved or if it was Natalie's interpretation and assumptions about their lives based on her own preconceived notions of a loving family. Since I did not collect data with students, I could not challenge nor confirm Natalie's statements, which is a limitation in my ability to analyze the data in more nuanced and complex ways. Future research on teacher identity (re)constitution should also interview students about their own views of inclusion and equity. Doing so rejects treating

children and youth as objects but rather dynamic individuals with their own relational agency. While teacher identity (re)constitution was focal unit of analysis, the inclusion of student voice in future research could have augmented understandings of the complex social interactions around inclusion and exclusion in schools.

### **Study Strengths**

A strength of this study was that it placed a spotlight on the multifaceted sociocultural dynamics that constrained and afforded teachers' abilities to enact critical inclusion in their practice contexts. In thinking about teacher resistance, it is also important to acknowledge teachers' situated identities within school systems. Teachers are positioned at the intersection between power and oppression. On one hand teachers have substantial power over their students by providing access to educational opportunities (Delpit, 1995). For instance, participants in this study acted as inclusion gatekeepers making decisions around which students could be included and which students remained segregated. At the same time, teachers face structural constraints on their power (Farber & Azar, 1999; Milner, 2008). The participants' communities of practice, for example, held them accountable for controlling their students' behaviors in those inclusive settings. Participants responded by limiting access to inclusive experiences unless students could demonstrate that they could demonstrate mastery of dominant norms. The interaction then of teacher positionality calls for a complex analysis of power in the social processes around teaching and learning.

One potential theoretical construct for this analysis is kyriarchy. While intersectionality explores intersecting forms of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991), kyriarchy interrogates interconnected forms of domination and submission (Fiorenza, 1992). In other words, kyriarchy describes the power structures that intersectionality creates (Osborne, 2015). The term coined by

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1992) to describe the situated experiences of elite White, female missionaries within the patriarchal structure of the church. In sum, these female missionaries are both subjected to patriarchy domination within the church but also perpetuate oppression through their work as missionaries with mostly poor people of color. It expands the notion of patriarchy beyond gender to explore how individuals' identities mediate the ways in which they are simultaneously oppressed and privileged. She describes the importance of looking at the complex intersections of domination both *within* women and *between* women.

Kyriarchy along with intersectionality has been taken up to explore social justice work around climate change (Osborne, 2015) as a way for climate change activists to “understand our own privilege and place the way we experience marginality as individuals as part of a broader context of systemic injustice” (Osborne, 2015, p. 142). Kyriarchy could be a useful theoretical construct to use in critical inclusive teacher preparation as a compliment to the budding work being done on intersectionality and special education (e.g., Annamma, et al., 2013; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Garcia & Ortiz, 2013; Gillborn, 2015). Potential research questions could include: (1) how do (special education) teachers' personal identities mediate their relationships with kyriarchal power structures in educational institutions?; (2) how do (special education) teachers' personal identities mediate their constructions and relationship to disabled identities?; or (3) how do (special education) teachers' personal identities mediate their actions for resistance or reification? In conclusion, kyriarchy can be a useful tool for understanding the complex forms power and positionality that inform teachers' practices for inclusion and equity.

Another strength of this study was that it provided a space to honor and celebrate points of teacher resistance. In studying side-by-side (Erickson, 2006b) with teachers, I shared my data and preliminary analysis with them throughout the course of the study which created space for



them to highlight or provide more detailed explanations for the ways in which their practices furthered or limited inclusion. Participants noted in the reflexive video analysis that they rarely get opportunities to critically analyze their practice in this way. Future research on teacher identity (re)constitution should consider methodological approaches to teacher and teacher education research that dismantle the uneven power dynamics between researcher and participant. Christianakis (2008) argues that through more equitable forms of engagement with research methodology, teachers become the *subject* rather than just the *object* of study. By being the subject, teachers get to have input on their own identity construction rather than having their reality is defined for them as the object (hooks, 1989, as cited in Christianakis, 2008). This process can emancipate teachers from the academic gaze. Furthermore, the process of engaging in research can blur the lines between subject and object. On one hand teachers, can define themselves as subjects but it also creates distance between themselves and their practice by making themselves the object of study. In this way, research can be a means for critical self-reflection and a catalyst for change.

Future research around teacher identity (re)constitution should involve teachers as researchers. Critical participatory action research methods are particularly conducive to this type of work (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013). Two key features of participatory action research are:

- Honoring and recognizing the capacity of individuals engaged in local everyday practice to participate in all aspects of the research process; and
- The research aims to improve practices in local settings by the participants themselves.

Critical participatory action research adds an additional dimension to participatory action research that involves “a commitment to bring together broad social analysis, the self-reflective

collective self-study of practice, and transformational action to improve things” (Kemmis, et al., 2013, p. 12). Specifically, for critical inclusion social the social analysis would focus on constructions of normalcy and difference with a commitment to increasing educational equity and inclusion for students on the margins in educational institutions. Critical participatory action research methods can be employed by teacher educators as well as teachers in P-12 settings. Research questions for teacher educators could include, (1) how does our program conceptualize normalcy and difference across coursework, fieldwork, and mentoring experiences?; (2) how is (teacher candidate /teacher educator/student) identity theorized throughout the program?; and (3) what opportunities do teacher candidates have to interrogate their identity construction through mediated practice experiences? Research questions that teachers may develop in practice contexts include: (1) how do my identities mediate my interactions with students and pedagogical decision making?; (2) how do my practices impede or support inclusion?; and (3) what are the systemic barriers that preclude me from enacting inclusion? This study indicated that teachers are simultaneously resisting and reifying dominant ideologies in their practice settings. Critical participatory action research can be a means for building and sustaining resistance strategies but also a means to disrupt social processes of reification in teacher and school-wide practice.

### **Final Thoughts**

In his letter to critical educators, Paulo Freire (2005) writes about the inevitable missteps that occur along the way:

We forge a school-adventure, a school that marches on, that is not afraid of the risks, and that rejects immobility. It is a school that thinks, that participates, that creates, that

speaks, that loves, that guesses, that passionately embraces and says *yes* to life. It is not a school that quiets down and quits. (p. 83)

The dual construction of identities as resisters and reifiers in this study underscores the formidable challenges of critical inclusive education. Indeed, critical inclusion represents a seismic shift in the way we prepare teachers, organize educational institutions, and understand our own histories and sociocultural spaces. At the same time, the data and the discussion around it offers a glimmer of hope. In the torrent of ideologies lurking in the shadows that seek to pathologize, sort, and segregate, teachers still found ways to resist and critique dominant structures. This is not to ignore the multiple and entrenched ways in which exclusion based on difference was reified by the participants and their communities of practice. But it offers promise for starting points that can be cultivated to create more inclusive schools. There is no ending point for this work but rather continued, relentless interrogation of the social processes that exclude and oppress. It *cannot* quiet down. It *cannot* quit. I humbly hope this project will offer some suggestions can contribute to the collective project of increased equity and inclusion.

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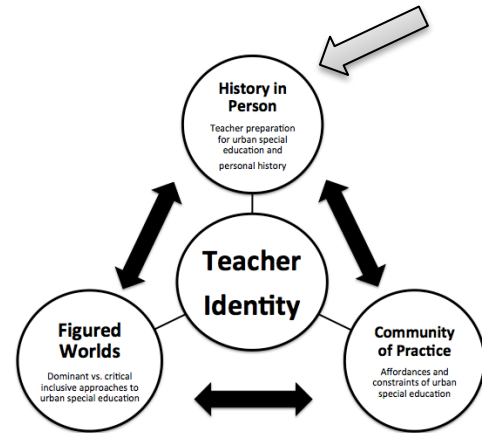
## APPENDIX A: 3-SERIES INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATORS

(Seidman, 2013)

### Interview #1: Establishing **history in person**

**Supporting Artifacts:** teacher preparation program materials (e.g., syllabi, course readings, rubrics, etc.)

**RQ1:** How do special education teachers in urban school settings use their knowledge from (a) their preparation program and (b) their personal histories to understand and critically analyze exclusion in relation to their teacher identity?



Concrete details about identity and teacher preparation program

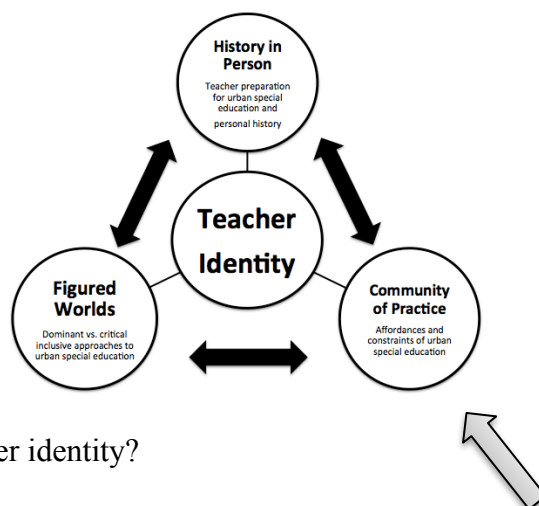
- Relationship between teacher preparation experience and your identity as an urban educator
  - Describe your previous experience working and/or living in urban settings
  - Describe why you chose to study at a program to prepare teachers for urban settings
  - (Show the SOE Values) What do the SOE values mean to you and your practice?
  - (Show the Department of Special Education Statement) How would you define sociocultural/behavior/cognitive approaches? How do you draw on them in your practice?
  - Describe how the program shaped/alterd/challenged your views of urban education/urban communities
    - What courses, professors, fieldwork experiences, assignments, etc. stand out to you as having made an impact on you and why?
    - Could you describe your project for the Action Research course?
  - Describe how your identity as an urban educator changed as a result of the program.
- Relationship between teacher preparation experience and your identity as a special educator
  - Describe your previous experience working with students with disabilities
  - Describe why you chose to pursue a career in special education
  - Describe how the program shaped/alterd/challenged your views of disability and special education service delivery
    - What courses, professors, fieldwork experiences, assignments, etc. stand out to you as having made an impact on you and why?
  - Describe how your identity as a special educator changed as a result of the program.

### Concrete details about identity and personal experiences

- Relationship between personal educational experiences and teacher identity
  - What are some examples of model or anti-model teachers from your teaching experience?
    - How do these experiences impact how you interact with students?
  - How would you describe your identity as a learner?
    - How does your learner identity impact your identity as a teacher?
  - Can you describe any critical educational experiences that shaped your identity as a teacher?
- Relationship between personal experiences with urban spaces and your identity
  - How would you define or characterize “urban schools”?
  - Describe your interactions with urban spaces throughout your life (residence, work place, schooling)
  - Describe your perceptions about urban spaces (both before and after preparation/work experience)
    - Have your perceptions of urban spaces shifted as a result of your preparation experience/working in urban schools?
- Relationship between personal experiences with disability/special education and your identity
  - How would you define or characterize “disability?”
  - Describe experiences (personal or professional) with people with disabilities
    - Have your perceptions of urban spaces shifted as a result of your preparation experience or working with students with disabilities?
  - Describe experiences (personal or professional) with special education
    - Have your perceptions of urban spaces shifted as a result of your preparation experience or working with students with disabilities?
  - How do your understandings of disability and special education impact your identity?

**Interview #2:** Situating teachers' daily practice in Community of Practice  
**Supporting Artifacts:** video observation recording, participant observation #2, administrator interview

**RQ2:** How do special education teachers in urban school settings engage in present activity through the mutual constitution of the 'regime of competence' (norms, values, and rules) of the community of practice and their teacher identity?



Concrete details about the administrative expectations and assessment of teachers that mediate the norms value, and rules of the Community of Practice (Questions will be developed from the administrator interview)

AND

Concrete details about teachers' enactment of the norms, values, and rules of the Community of Practice in their classroom (Questions will be developed based on data from participants' video observation and participant observation #2)

See individual interview guides for each participant.

## Teacher Interview 2 Guide (Sarah)

### Clip 1: Transition between classes

*(Focus: Students with real vs. constructed disabilities)*

- What are your thoughts about the clip?
- What was said in that conversation?
- What types of goals does she have for him during the read aloud?
- Why is his desk positioned there?
- What is the nature of their relationship?
- In the observation, you said that Maurice is inappropriately placed in your classroom. You called it a conduct issue. Can you say more about that?
- You have said that Maurice is older and more experienced which can be detrimental to the other students. Can you say more about that?
- You have said how this negatively impacts the students in your class, how does it impact Maurice?
- How do you think Maurice's race/the race of other students plays into this?
- How does this relate to the social construction of disability as you learned in your program?
- How do you simultaneously think about the social construction of disability but also operate in a system that labels students with disabilities?
- Restate what she has said.
- How do you think your interactions with Maurice support inclusion?
- What are the particular challenges you face in promoting inclusion in your interactions with Maurice?

### Clip 2: Read aloud

*(Focus: Messaging about disability)*

- What are your initial thoughts about this clip?
- This book seems to have a disability theme. What is the name and plot of the book?
- What are some of the themes and messages of the book?
- Why and how did you chose this book for these students?
- What are other ways that you try to incorporate themes around disability into your classroom discussions?
- How do you think your messaging about disability promote inclusion?
- What are some challenges you face in promoting inclusion through messaging with students?

### Clip 3: Interaction with Dave regarding his escort

*(Focus: Opportunities for integration into general education)*

- What are your initial thoughts about this clip?
- Is the other class a general ed class?
- What does being "sent back" to this class mean?
- Why do some students have escorts and others do not?
- What are the implications of escorts on stigmatizing special education students?

- Why does Dave not want an escort?
- Do you think they are necessary?
- Do the benefits outweigh the stigma associated by being followed by an adult in the hallway?
- Why do you think Maurice hangs out in the doorway? Have you thought about this before?
- In the first participant observation, you discussed how you did not feel supported when students like Maurice act out by school security/admin. Can you say more about this?
- Administrator 1 said he wanted you to feel like you could come to him or challenge him if something was not right. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- How does the use of escorts promote inclusion?
- How does the use of escorts pose challenges to inclusion?

#### **Clip 4: Review expectations for bringing back labs**

*(Focus: Inclusion as conditional and connections to general education curriculum)*

- What are your initial thoughts about this clip?
- What is the backstory about the labs being taken away?
- Do general education students get labs taken away?
- Is this fair? How may this disadvantage them in preparation for high school?
- Why is Nate seated at the front of the room?
- How does the current state of science labs promote inclusion?
- How are the particular challenges you face with the current state of science labs to promoting inclusion?

#### **Clip 5: Lesson on sound and light waves**

*(Focus: Connections to general education curriculum)*

- What are your initial thoughts about this clip?
- Why did you choose this topic?
- How is it connected to the general education curriculum?
- What type of co-planning do you engage in with science teachers?

*(Focus: Models of inclusion UDL)*

- Why did she use the interactive features?
- What is her knowledge of UDL from her teacher preparation?
- How is she drawing on that for this lesson?
- Is she drawing on teacher preparation or is this from PD she has received at school?
- How did she access these videos?
- How does your curriculum design promote inclusion?
- What challenges do you face in designing curriculum for promoting inclusion?

#### **Clip 6: Snack incentive/free time**

*(Focus: Models for inclusion UDL/PBIS)*

- What are your initial thoughts about this clip?
- Who is the phone call to?
- How does the snack system work? Is it school-wide or just her classroom?

- How does being in special education/urban school necessitate different types of incentive systems if at all?
- Is this a Positive Behavior Intervention? Did she learn this in her program or from her school?
- Discussion is focused on engagement and relevance for students. Can you say more about talking about the hat and looking it up online? What does this mean for relationship building?
- Can you tell me about your behavior chart system? How does it work? Are you drawing on elements you learned in your preparation program to design it?
- When I spoke with Mr. Administrator 1, he talked about a PD where you watched a video called “Dear Teacher” that highlighted how different students may require different approaches. As a special educator, how did this PD influence you? Is this similar to messaging you received in your preparation?
- How does your incentive system promote inclusion?
- What challenges do you face in creating an incentive system that promotes inclusion?

## Teacher Interview 2 Guide (Denise)

### Clip 1: Writing/spelling words with James

*(Focus: Curricular decisions)*

- What are your thoughts about this clip?
- How do you think your curricular decisions support inclusion?
- What are the particular challenges you face in promoting inclusion in your decision-making?
- What curriculum are you using and how did you decide to use that curriculum?
- What connections, if any, are there between the curriculum you use and the general education classroom?

*(Focus: Inclusive Practices/PBIS)*

- Are you actively using PBIS?
- How do you think your use of PBIS supports inclusion?
- What are the particular challenges you face in promoting inclusion by using PBIS?
- What is the purpose of the iPad break? How do the students earn them? Is this specific for James?
- What do you know about PBIS? Did you learn about PBIS in your preparation program or at your school site?
- How does PBIS contribute to inclusion?

*(Focus: Data Collection)*

- How do you think your data collection supports inclusion?
- What are the particular challenges you face in promoting inclusion with your data collection?
- How do you track progress and why? What do you do with this data? How is it used in instructional decision-making?
- How is it used in thinking about having students participate in the general education classroom?

### Clip 2: Matt and Linus

*(Focus: Classroom organization for inclusion)*

- Preview that we will be looking at Max and Lucas
- What are your initial thoughts about this clip?
- How do you think your classroom organization supports inclusion?
- What are the particular challenges you face in promoting inclusion with your classroom organization?
- How do you organize your classroom? What are each of your students doing? How did you decide what they should focus on?
- How do you decide which students is working with which para?  
Could Lucas be resisting speech?

### Clip 3: Sending Otis to general education classroom

*(Focus: Opportunities for integration into general education)*

- What are your initial thoughts about this clip?



- How do you think your processes for integrating students into general education supports inclusion?
- What are the particular challenges you face in promoting inclusion when you integrate students into special education?
- Why did you ask the para to go with him?
- Are paras required to accompany students to the general education classroom?
- How do you collaborate with Otis's general ed teacher?
- Why do you prep him? Why do you give him a fidget?
- What are your goals for Otis in the gen ed room?
- You said before that you think Otis should be integrated into general education. Can you tell me more about that? Do you think his race has anything to do with his placement?

#### **Clip 4: Car zooming on line with Linus**

*(Focus: Inclusive practices/UDL)*

- What are your initial reactions to this clip?
- How do you think your processes for implementing UDL into general education supports inclusion?
- What are the particular challenges you face in promoting inclusion when you implement UDL in your classroom?
- What did you learn about UDL in your preparation? Are there examples of you using UDL in your practice?

## Teacher Interview 2 Guide (Anna)

### Clip 1: Provides Byron with a fidget when frustrated

*(Focus: Inclusive practices/UDL)*

- What are your thoughts about the clip?
- What was the problem(s)?
- How did you address it?
- How do you think your interactions supports inclusion?
- What are the particular challenges to promoting inclusion with these strategies?
- Are these strategies that students can carry over into the classroom?
- What work do you do to facilitate that?
- Are general educators receptive to it? How do you help them to understand flexibility?
- How does this relate to your role as a special educator?

### Clip 2: Explaining purpose of learning sight words

*(Focus: Curricular decisions)*

- What are your initial thoughts about this clip?
- How do you think providing context or a rationale for learning sight words help facilitate inclusion?
- Why are you focusing on sight words?
- Is this part of the general education curriculum or more intensive instruction?
- Is this related to what they are doing in general education?
- How do you plan with the general educator?
- What is your goal for these students around reading?
- What is your goal for these students in accessing the general ed curriculum?
- How are the students going to generalize this knowledge in the classroom?
- What are some challenges you face in promoting inclusion through messaging with students?

### Clip 3: Correcting Byron

*(Focus: teaching self-love strategies)*

- What are your initial thoughts about this clip?
- I noticed in my observation that Byron struggles with self-esteem and often compares himself to other students. What strategies are you using to help him with this?
- Is he able to use them in the general education setting? Is it better or worse there?
- Do his general education teachers see this behavior as well?
- I noticed that building self-esteem is important to you as an educator as evidenced by your signs and the super hero video you made with your students. Why is this important to you and how does it relate to inclusion?
- Do you face any challenges in promoting these strategies for increased inclusion?

## Teacher Interview 2 Guide (Natalie)

### Clip 1: Coaching Tommy in the research process

*(Focus: Purpose of segregated setting)*

- What are your initial reactions to this clip?
- What are your goals for this lesson?
- I noticed that the students were able to select topics that were important to them. Describe how students selected their topics. How do these topics relate to the goals of the assignment/for your students?
- I noticed that your goal was related to them reaching their IEP goals. How do the students' specific needs play into this? What's on their IEP/not on their IEP? Do you use the IEP authentically?
- What support do your students really need? How do you provide it?
- I also noticed that you all talk about their grades publically and put them up on the board. Some may say that this can embarrass student but it doesn't seem the case with your students. Why is this? How have you made this normalized? Do they bully each other? Why or why not?
- How do the goals of this lesson support inclusion?
- How does this lesson challenge you to be inclusive?
- Do you think that this class needs to be segregated?
- What are students not getting in order to be in this class?

### Clip 2: Coaching Tommy to talk to his general education teacher about his grade

*(Focus: Collaboration with general education)*

- What is your initial reaction to this clip?
- It seems to me that a lot of your role is managing their grades and assignments for general education teachers. How does this relate to inclusion?
- What does your collaborative relationship look like with the general education teachers?
- You have mentioned that this varies between teachers. Can you describe these different relationships?
- Describe what your push-in work looks like.
- How does your relationship with general educators support inclusion?
- How does your relationship with general educators challenge inclusion?

### Clip 3: Talking about basketball game

*(Focus: Relationship building)*

- What is your initial reaction to this clip?
- In my two observations, I noticed that the students have a special relationship with you. You joke around, talk about their families, their interests. Another clip, Todd said how you always laugh at their jokes. Can you tell me how you cultivate this relationship and why?
- In the first interview, you said you wanted to teach the "disadvantaged" and didn't want to teach in [affluent suburb]. How do you think your relationship with your students is impacted because they are different from you?

- In the first observation, I noticed that you were talking about a movie they had watched in class about jail and they had to answer questions about the jail environment. You made several comments about how you hope that they don't end up in jail or warning them about how difficult it is to be in jail. Why did you talk to them about this?
- Do you think you would have said those things if they were from [affluent suburb]? What do you think that means about your own biases?

#### **Clip 4: Giving a note to Kalasha**

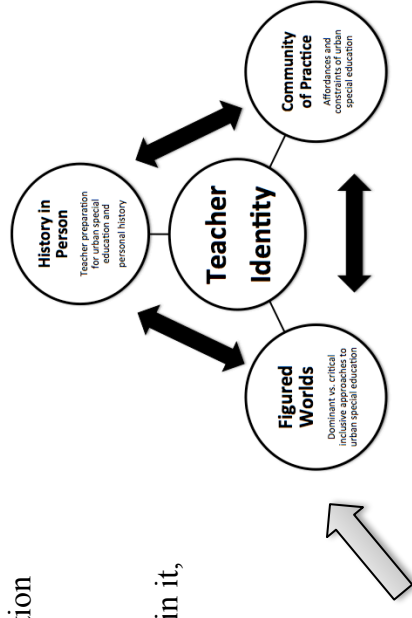
*(Focus: Relationship building)*

What are your initial thoughts on this clip?

- I noticed that Kalasha had a very different experience in the classroom. She is physical separate. She is the only female. Spoke softly. Body language is hunched over. Does not participate in the chit chat of the previous clip. Why do you think she seems so separate from the rest of the class? Do you think this bothers her?
- How is your relationship with her different from the other boys?
- Are the boys excluding her?
- What did you write on the note? Why did you give it as a note rather than saying it out loud?
- Very different from the boys where you could talk openly about their grades?
- How do you think your relationships with students facilitate inclusion?
- How do you think your relationships with students challenge you to be inclusive?

### Interview #3: Reflexive Video Analysis (Re)figuring the world of urban special education Supporting artifacts: Participants' curated clips from video observation

**RQ3:** How do special education teachers in urban settings use dominant versus critical conceptions of special education to figure the world of special education, their role within it, and its impact on their teacher identity?



<b>Participants:</b>	<b>Duration:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Location:</b>
<b>Things to SAY before you begin:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The purpose of this video recall interview is to better understand your practice and to listen to your explanations about what happens in the classroom when you teach.</li> <li>This interview will last approximately two hours.</li> <li>Whatever you say here will remain confidential. That means that we won't reveal what was said here, although we will summarize the information to reflect general patterns and themes.</li> <li>We will record this interview and transcribe the recording. In the transcript, we will replace the names mentioned here with pseudonyms.</li> </ul>	
<b>Things to REMEMBER:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previous to the interview, watch the video clips that the participants selected during interview #2.</li> <li>Make sure to test the video equipment previous to the meeting.</li> <li>Make sure that you test the sound quality on the recording right before you begin your session.</li> <li>Provide time for the participant to respond. Pause after each question and after each time the participant seem to have answered the question</li> <li>Make sure that you know the questions and use them as semi structure. Try to go deeper into events that seem to hold participant meaning and that the participant is eager to talk about</li> <li>Make sure you have batteries and memory cards on hand for the recorders.</li> <li>Check your watch when you begin &amp; track the time.</li> <li>Label your recordings: Participant pseudonym, date and time.</li> </ul>	
<b>Things to SAY at the END:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank your participants.</li> </ul>	

Questions		Detail Probes or Expanders		Elaboration and Clarification Probes	
<p><i>Before this interview, the participants chose 2 video clips. One the represents their promotion of equity and inclusion and one that represents how their context constrains their ability to promote equity and inclusion.</i></p>		<p><i>These probes are the basic who, where, what, when and how questions. Use them to obtain a complete and detailed picture of some activity or experience. At the end of the probes ask, "Are there other key points that we haven't covered about the general question: (repeat the question from column 1)." "</i></p>		<p><i>These probes help to keep participants talking more about a subject. Use non-verbal as well as verbal strategies. Pick the ones that fit the context. These probes are used to make sure that you've understood what the participant has just said. Pick the ones that fit the context.</i></p>	
<b>Part 1: Video Sharing</b>					
<p>Show each participants' identified clips and then ask the participant,</p> <p><b>Tell me about why you chose these particular clips.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell us about why you chose this clip.</li> <li>• How does this clip demonstrate your commitment to inclusion?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does this clip demonstrate challenges to your commitment to inclusion?</li> </ul>	<p>What kind of activities occurred?</p> <p>Give some examples of what you mean.</p> <p>What do you mean by "equity" or "inclusion"?</p> <p>You said it was difficult? What makes it difficult?</p>			
<b>Part 2: Focus Group</b>					
<p>After each participant shares their clips and talks about them, ask the following questions to the entire group,</p> <p><b>Tell me what you noticed about the series of clips we shared today.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did your contexts allow you to promote inclusion?</li> <li>• How did your contexts pose challenges to promoting inclusion?</li> <li>• What are the similarities of how you interpreted inclusion?</li> <li>• What are the differences in how you interpreted inclusion?</li> <li>• What does this mean for how you see your roles as urban special educators?</li> <li>• What are you trying to accomplish in this role?</li> </ul>	<p>Can you tell me more about the challenges that you face?</p> <p>Can you provide examples of how you enact your role as an urban special educator?</p>			
<p><b>Tell me about how these series of clips show influence from your teacher preparation given your particular contexts.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What specific course experiences, field experiences, assignments, etc. from your preparation still impact how you understand your role as a special educator?</li> <li>• What commonalities do you see across how you interpret your role as a result of your preparation?</li> <li>• I noticed that you all see yourselves as advocates for your students. What are some common ways you advocate for your students?</li> <li>• What are the differences across your interpretations of your role as a result of your preparation?</li> <li>• To what extent do your contexts account for the differences?</li> </ul>	<p>Give some examples of how preparation impacts how you understand your role.</p>			

<p><b>Questions</b></p> <p><i>Before this interview, the participants chose 2 video clips. One the represents their promotion of equity and inclusion and one that represents how their context constrains their ability to promote equity and inclusion.</i></p>	<p><b>Detail Probes or Expanders</b></p> <p><i>These probes are the basic who, where, what, when and how questions. Use them to obtain a complete and detailed picture of some activity or experience. At the end of the probes ask, "Are there other key points that we haven't covered about the general question: (repeat the question from column 1)." "</i></p>	<p><b>Elaboration and Clarification Probes</b></p> <p><i>These probes help to keep participants talking more about a subject. Use non-verbal as well as verbal strategies. Pick the ones that fit the context. These probes are used to make sure that you've understood what the participant has just said. Pick the ones that fit the context.</i></p>
<p><i>Tell how this reflexive process (today's interview and the previous two interviews) changed/made you think differently about your role as an urban special educator.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are specific changes in how you think about your role?</li> <li>• What did you understand about your role before this process?</li> <li>• What new understandings do you have about your role now?</li> <li>• Did any part of this research process surprise you? Why?</li> </ul>	<p>You said you were surprised. Can you tell me why?</p>

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ADMINISTRATORS

Concrete details about administrative expectations for teachers in the school.

- Describe your expectations for teachers in your school.
    - Describe a model teacher at your school.
    - What makes teachers successful at your school?
    - What is important to your administration in terms of pedagogy?
    - How are your expectations messaged to teachers?
  - Describe how teachers are formally evaluated in your school?
    - Who conducts the evaluation? How often?
    - What is the criteria for evaluation?
    - Who develops the criteria?
    - What are the potential outcomes of the evaluation?
  - Describe how teachers are informally evaluated in your school.
    - How do you recognize successful teachers? Is this public?
- Describe, if at all, how teachers are expected to promote educational equity in your school.
- In what ways is equity incorporated into how teachers are evaluated?

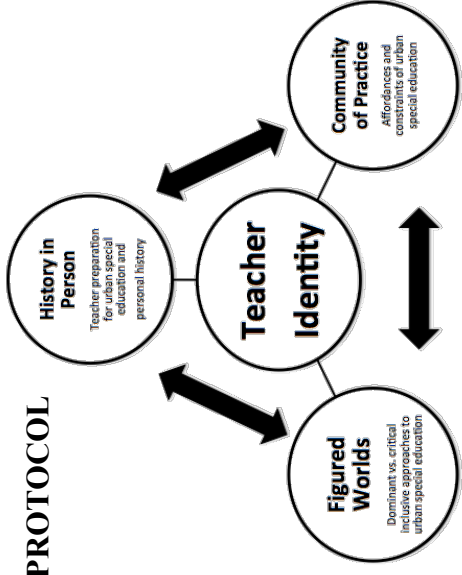
Concrete details about the supports teachers receive from the administration.

- Describe the supports you have in place for teachers who are either new/demonstrate a need for growth on their evaluation.
  - What type of mentorship programs does your school have?
  - What type of professional development opportunities do you provide?
  - How are supports specifically geared towards special education teachers?
- Describe the pathways for teachers to make suggestions or push back on administrative policies particularly in regard to educational equity.
  - How are teachers' voices heard in your school?
  - What recourse do teachers have if they are unsatisfied with a school policy?
  - Can you provide examples of the administration responding to teacher concerns?



APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION #1 PROTOCOL

Date of Log:  
Participant/Site:



Brief Synopsis of Activities, Observations, Meetings	Primary purpose: new understandings about the community of practice (i.e. teacher's role, school rules/norms/values, scheduling, etc.)	Secondary purposes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New understandings of history in person in action (teacher preparation or personal history)</li><li>• New understandings about how teachers figure the world of urban special education</li></ul>

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION #2 PROTOCOL

(Gutiérrez, 2016)

Date:  
Participant/Site:  
Class Observed:

Official Activities (e.g., lecture, read aloud, planned interventions etc.)	Unofficial Activities (e.g., sharpening pencil, informal conversation, etc.)	Questions/ Impressions/Hunches
Activity 1:	Activity 1:	
Duration:	Duration:	
Activity 2:	Activity 2:	
Duration:	Duration:	
Activity 3:	Activity 3:	
Duration:	Duration:	

## APPENDIX E: INTRODUCTION EMAIL- TEACHERS

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

My name is Molly Siuty and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Kansas in the Department of Special Education. ***This is an invitation to participate in a research study that I am conducting on teacher preparation, inclusion, social justice, and urban education.*** I received your contact information from Dr. Zaviar Mills from the University of the Prairie Center City. He recommended you as a participant based on your demonstrated commitment to special education and social justice. He felt that based on your skills and experience, you could provide great insight on my research focus area.

The study I am conducting is my dissertation for the doctoral program. It is mainly qualitative in nature. ***Broadly, participation in the study would involve 2 one-hour interviews, one one-hour video recording, and one meeting for a reflexive video study group (total of 4-5 hours of your time).*** I am willing to travel to your school site and work around your schedule. The proposed timeline for data collection is September through December 2016. Please know that no identifying information will be made public and pseudonyms will be used for names of people and places included in the final manuscript. Also, all data will be kept on a secure KU server that is only accessible to me as the researcher.

***If you are interested in participation, I would like to set up a phone call to discuss the project with you in more depth.*** Please know that this does not mean that you are agreeing to participate. It is only meant for you to learn more about my study and evaluate if you are willing and able to be a participant. There is absolutely no pressure to participate if you do not want to. Furthermore, if you do decide to participate in the future, there will be a formalized consent form with detailed information about study participation that is approved by KU's internal review board. I will also coordinate with your school district to ensure that the appropriate approval is in place.

***If you are interested in hearing more, please respond back to this email with some dates and times you are available.*** I will make myself available to you at those times. Thank you so much for considering participating in this study and I look forward to speaking with you!

Sincerely,

Molly Baustien Siuty Doctoral Candidate  
Department of Special Education  
The University of Kansas  
Email: molly.siuty@ku.edu  
Cell: 570-242-2560

## APPENDIX F: INTRODUCTION EMAIL-ADMINISTRATORS

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

My name is Molly Siuty and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Kansas in the Department of Special Education. ***I have invited your colleague, \_\_\_\_\_, to participate in a research study that I am conducting on teacher preparation, inclusion, social justice, and urban education.*** I have spoken with \_\_\_\_\_ at length and they have expressed interest in moving forward with the study. I am reaching out to you to make sure that you are comfortable with the project and also to learn more about your district's policies regarding educational research.

The study I am conducting is my dissertation for the doctoral program. It is mainly qualitative in nature. ***Broadly, participation in the study would involve 2 one-hour interviews with teachers, one one-hour video recording of teacher practice, and one meeting with all participants for a reflexive video study group. It will also involve one one-hour administrator interview with you.*** The proposed timeline for data collection is September through December 2016. Please know that no identifying information will be made public and pseudonyms will be used for names of people and places included in the final manuscript. In the video recording, the camera will be angled as not to capture any children's faces and only focus on the teacher. If a child's image does appear by accident, it will be censored. Also, all data will be kept on a secure KU server that is only accessible to me as the researcher.

***I would like to set up a phone call to discuss the project with you in more depth.*** Please know that this does not mean that you are giving your permission for me to conduct my study at your school site. It is only meant for you to learn more about my study. Furthermore, if you do decide to participate in the future, there will be a formalized consent form with detailed information about study participation that is approved by KU's internal review board. I will be sure to coordinate with your school district to ensure that the appropriate approval is in place.

***If you are interested in hearing more, please respond back to this email with some dates and times you are available for a phone call.*** I will make myself available to you at those times. Thank you so much for considering participating in this study and I look forward to speaking with you!

Sincerely,

Molly Baustien Siuty  
 Doctoral Candidate  
 Department of Special Education  
 The University of Kansas  
 Email: molly.siuty@ku.edu  
 Cell: 570-242-2560

## APPENDIX G: INTRODUCTION LETTER-PARENTS AND GUARDIAN



Department of Special Education

### INTRODUCTION LETTER

Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Molly Siuty and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Kansas in the Department of Special Education. I will be working with [insert teacher's name] to conduct a research study in order to better understand the impact of teacher preparation on teacher practice. **The purpose of this letter is to provide you with an overview of the study and invite your child to be part of the research process.**

The focus of the present study is teacher practice and how it relates to teacher preparation. Therefore, teachers, not students, will be the focal participants. **The only portion of the study that will include your child, if you consent to participation, is the video recording of a single lesson (maximum of one hour).** The purpose of this recording is to play it back to your child's teacher as part of an interview. The teacher and I will critically reflect on their practice to see how and to what extent their teacher preparation currently influences their teaching.

**As a researcher, it is very important to maintain the anonymity of the participants in the study, particularly children and minors.** The research design of this study includes steps to protect confidentiality. These steps include:

- The camera will be positioned as not to capture the faces of the students.
- Any identifying information in the audio recording (e.g., real names) will be masked in the video.
- Unique ID numbers will be used in audio transcriptions in place of real names.
- Pseudonyms will replace names of people and places in any publications or presentations of this study.
- All digital data will be kept on the researcher's password protected personal computer.

Attached to this letter are the Letter of Consent and Informed Consent Form. **If you feel comfortable having your child participate in the study, please fill out the attached consent letter and return to [insert teacher's name].** If you have more questions about participation in this study, you can reach out to me anytime with the contact information at the bottom of this letter. Thank you so much for considering participating in this study!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Molly Siuty'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Molly Siuty  
Primary Investigator  
(570) 242-2506 [molly.siuty@ku.edu](mailto:molly.siuty@ku.edu)

## APPENDIX H: LETTER OF CONSENT-TEACHERS



Department of Special Education

### CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION LETTER

**Dear Participant,**

The University of Kansas and its School of Education and Department of Special Education support the practice of protection for human participants in research. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you want to participate in the present study. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. The study will be carried out from October 2016 to May 2017. The data from interviews, video recordings, and field notes will be collected, de-identified, analyzed, and used for the study. Only data collected from consenting subjects will be used in the analysis and final manuscript. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time by contacting the primary investigator, Molly Siuty.

### PURPOSE

This study will explore the social processes through which graduates of an the same teacher preparation program develop their identity within the power dynamics of their communities of practice. The researcher will draw on teacher's preparation experience and personal histories to examine ways in which teachers reify dominant ideologies but also how they demonstrate resistance given the institutional constraints that they face. Using critical ethnographic methods the researcher will co-construct with teachers a critical analysis of institutional systems and their own teaching practices. Together, the researcher and participants will explore the naturalized and taken-for-granted social processes that occur in their daily practice. Through this dialectic process, they will strive to identify locations for special education teacher resistance that challenge the status quo, promote inclusivity and, produce better outcomes for students with disabilities in urban schools. The three research questions for this study are:

How do special education teachers in urban school settings:

- 1) use their knowledge from (a) their preparation program and (b) their personal histories to understand and critically analyze exclusion in relation to their teacher identity?
- 2) engage in present activity through the mutual constitution of the (norms, values, and rules) of the community of practice and their teacher identity?
- 3) use dominant versus critical conceptions of special education to figure the world of special education, their role within it, and its impact on their teacher identity?

## **PROCEDURE**

### *Interviews*

Teachers will participate in a series of three progressive interviews. The first two interviews will last approximately one hour. The researcher will reach out to the teachers to determine a mutually convenient time for the interviews. The third interview will occur as a group reflexive video analysis and last approximately two hours. All four special education teacher participants will meet at The University of Kansas, Edwards Campus during a mutually convenient time that the researcher will coordinate. During this interview, they will view clips from each other's video recordings and engage in critical discussion. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed for research purposes.

### *Video Recording*

Prior to the second interview, the researcher will video record each teacher for one lesson period (maximum of one hour). During the first interview, the PI and the participant will set up the date and time for the video recording. This video recording will be referenced during the second interview and also used to select clips for the group reflexive video analysis. The audio from the video will be transcribed for research purposes.

### *Participant Observations*

This study will involve two participant observations lasting one class period (maximum of one hour). The first will occur prior to the first interview in order to situate the special education teachers' practice. The second will occur simultaneously with the video recording to substantiate the data collected on video. Observations will be recorded by the researcher as ethnographic field notes.

## **RISKS**

The special education teachers may also share personal or sensitive information during the course of the three interviews such as critical reflection on their practice that

exposes professional missteps or mistakes. They may also share examples of when they took actions that went against the rules, norms, or values of their administration. It is important to protect the privacy of any sensitive information shared during these interviews.

The researcher will not share the content of the interviews with any of the participants' supervisors or colleagues. During the third interview the participants will meet at the University of Kansas, Edwards Campus as a neutral meeting place away from sites of employment. The participants will not have the same place of employment and they will be asked to keep everything shared during that interview confidential. Any data collected as a result of this study will only be disseminated after it has been de-identified.

## **BENEFITS**

Special education teachers will benefit from being able to critically reflect on their practice using video recording and group reflexive video analysis. They will also have an opportunity to reflect back on their preparation experiences and perhaps glean new understandings of how information from the preparation program can impact their daily practice to make them more inclusive educators.

## **PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY**

Participants' names will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about them or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher will use a pseudonym rather than their real names. Any identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

The researcher will ensure that all materials collected, as part of this study, will be kept confidential. Electronic data will be kept in a password protected folder on the primary investigator personal computer. All physical documents will remain locked in a filing cabinet. Only the primary investigator will have access to these materials.

## **REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION**

Participants are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and they may refuse to do so. However, if they refuse to sign, they cannot participate in this study.

## **CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION**

Participants may withdraw consent to participate in this study at any time. Once they withdraw, any collected data associated with them or their interactions with the group will be destroyed. In addition, the researcher will not record future data associated with the participant or their interactions with the group. Participants also have the right to cancel their permission to use



and disclose further information collected about them, in writing, at any time, by sending a written request to: *Molly Siuty, Department of Special Education, 5th Floor Joseph R. Pearson Hall, 122 West Campus Rd., Lawrence, KS 66045. .*

### **QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION**

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researchers listed at the end of this consent form. A copy of this consent statement is being provided for you to keep. We appreciate your cooperation very much.

Sincerely,

Molly Siuty (Principal Investigator) and Dr. Elizabeth Kozleski (Faculty Advisor)

## Consent to Participate

### PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email [irb@ku.edu](mailto:irb@ku.edu).

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

**Printed Name:**

---

**Sign Name:**

---

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,

Molly Siuty  
Principal Investigator  
Dept. of Special Education  
5<sup>th</sup> Fl. Joseph R. Pearson Hall  
122 West Campus Road  
Lawrence, KS 66045  
[molly.siuty@ku.edu](mailto:molly.siuty@ku.edu)  
570-242-2560

Dr. Elizabeth Kozleski  
Faculty Advisor  
Dept. of Special Education  
5<sup>th</sup> Fl. Joseph R. Pearson Hall  
122 West Campus Road  
Lawrence, KS 66045  
[elizabeth.kozleski@ku.edu](mailto:elizabeth.kozleski@ku.edu)  
303-884-8482

## APPENDIX I: LETTER OF CONSENT-ADMINISTRATORS



Department of Special Education

### CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION LETTER

**Dear Participant,**

The University of Kansas and its School of Education and Department of Special Education support the practice of protection for human participants in research. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you want to participate in the present study. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. The study will be carried out from October 2016 to May 2017. The data from interviews, video recordings, and field notes will be collected, de-identified, analyzed, and used for the study. Only data collected from consenting subjects will be used in the analysis and final manuscript. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time by contacting the primary investigator, Molly Siuty.

### PURPOSE

This study will explore the social processes through which graduates of the same teacher preparation program develop their identity within the power dynamics of their communities of practice. The researcher will draw on teacher's preparation experience and personal histories to examine ways in which teachers reify dominant ideologies but also how they demonstrate resistance given the institutional constraints that they face. Using critical ethnographic methods the researcher will co-construct with teachers a critical analysis of institutional systems and their own teaching practices. Together, the researcher and participants will explore the naturalized and taken-for-granted social processes that occur in their daily practice. Through this dialectic process, they will strive to identify locations for special education teacher resistance that challenge the status quo, promote inclusivity and, produce better outcomes for students with disabilities in urban schools. The three research questions for this study are:

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1) use their knowledge from (a) their preparation program and (b) their personal histories to understand and critically analyze exclusion in relation to their teacher identity?

- 2) engage in present activity through the mutual constitution of the (norms, values, and rules) of the community of practice and their teacher identity?
- 3) use dominant versus critical conceptions of special education to figure the world of special education, their role within it, and its impact on their teacher identity?

## **PROCEDURE**

Administrators will participate in one semi-structured interview lasting a maximum of one hour. The researcher will communicate with the participant via phone or email to set up a mutually convenient time for the interview at the participant's school site. The purpose of this interview is to establish the rules, norms, and values of the community practice as they are imposed, messaged, and evaluated by the participants' supervisors. This interview will not discuss individual teacher performance but rather administrative expectations for all educators in the school. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed for research purposes.

## **RISKS**

There are no anticipated risks or excess burden to be placed on participants.

## **BENEFITS**

Administrators and students will benefit by having teachers critically reflect on their practice in the hopes of gaining new understandings about teacher identity development and how they can promote greater equity and inclusivity in their schools.

## **PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY**

Participants' names will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about them or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher will use a pseudonym rather than their real names. Any identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

The researcher will ensure that all materials collected, as part of this study, will be kept confidential. Electronic data will be kept in a password protected folder on the primary investigator personal computer. All physical documents will remain locked in a filing cabinet. Only the primary investigator will have access to these materials.

## **REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION**

Participants are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and they may refuse to do so. However, if they refuse to sign, they cannot participate in this study.

## **CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION**

Participants may withdraw consent to participate in this study at any time. Once they withdraw, any collected data associated with them or their interactions with the group will be destroyed. In addition,

the researcher will not record future data associated with the participant or their interactions with the group. Participants also have the right to cancel their permission to use and disclose further information collected about them, in writing, at any time, by sending a written request to: *Molly Siuty, Department of Special Education, 5th Floor Joseph R. Pearson Hall, 122 West Campus Rd., Lawrence, KS 66045. .*

## **QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION**

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researchers listed at the end of this consent form. A copy of this consent statement is being provided for you to keep. We appreciate your cooperation very much.

Sincerely,

Molly Siuty (Principal Investigator) and Dr. Elizabeth Kozleski (Faculty Advisor)

## Consent to Participate

### PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email [irb@ku.edu](mailto:irb@ku.edu).

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

**Printed Name:**

---

**Sign Name:**

---

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,

Molly Siuty  
Principal Investigator  
Dept. of Special Education  
5<sup>th</sup> Fl. Joseph R. Pearson Hall  
122 West Campus Road  
Lawrence, KS 66045  
[molly.siuty@ku.edu](mailto:molly.siuty@ku.edu)  
570-242-2560

Dr. Elizabeth Kozleski  
Faculty Advisor  
Dept. of Special Education  
5<sup>th</sup> Fl. Joseph R. Pearson Hall  
122 West Campus Road  
Lawrence, KS 66045  
[elizabeth.kozleski@ku.edu](mailto:elizabeth.kozleski@ku.edu)  
303-884-8482

## APPENDIX J: LETTER OF CONSENT-PARENTS AND GUARDIANS



Department of Special Education

### CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION LETTER

**Dear Parent/Guardian,**

The University of Kansas and its School of Education and Department of Special Education support the practice of protection for human participants in research. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you want to participate in the present study. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. The study will be carried out from October 2016 to May 2017. The data from interviews, video recordings, and field notes will be collected, de-identified, analyzed, and used for the study. Only data collected from consenting subjects will be used in the analysis and final manuscript. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time by contacting the primary investigator, Molly Siuty.

### PURPOSE

This study will explore the social processes through which graduates of the same teacher preparation program develop their identity within the power dynamics of their communities of practice. The researcher will draw on teacher's preparation experience and personal histories to examine ways in which teachers reify dominant ideologies but also how they demonstrate resistance given the institutional constraints that they face. Using critical ethnographic methods the researcher will co-construct with teachers a critical analysis of institutional systems and their own teaching practices. Together, the researcher and participants will explore the naturalized and taken-for-granted social processes that occur in their daily practice. Through this dialectic process, they will strive to identify locations for special education teacher resistance that challenge the status quo, promote inclusivity and, produce better outcomes for students with disabilities in urban schools. The three research questions for this study are:

How do special education teachers in urban school settings:

- 1) use their knowledge from (a) their preparation program and (b) their personal histories to understand and critically analyze exclusion in relation to their teacher identity?
- 2) engage in present activity through the mutual constitution of the (norms, values, and rules) of the community of practice and their teacher identity?

3) use dominant versus critical conceptions of special education to figure the world of special education, their role within it, and its impact on their teacher identity?

## **PROCEDURE**

During this study, the researcher will video record a single lesson lasting a maximum of one hour. Students will not be asked to engage in the lesson beyond their typical daily classroom routines. As the focus of this study is teacher practice, the camera will be focused on the teacher. The camera will be purposefully positioned as not to capture the faces of the students. However, their voices will be captured and transcribed for research purposes.

## **RISKS**

Since students will not be asked to do anything beyond their typical daily classroom routines, there are no anticipated risks or excess burden to be placed on participants.

## **BENEFITS**

Students will benefit by having teachers critically reflect on their practice in the hopes of gaining new understandings about teacher identity development and how they can promote greater equity and inclusivity in their schools.

## **PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY**

As stated previously, the camera will be placed purposefully as not to capture student faces. In the rare case that a student's face is captured accidentally, it will be masked through video editing. Furthermore, all identifying information on the audio recording (e.g., real names) will also be masked in the video. In the transcription of student voices, a unique ID number will be used in place of real names.

Participants' names will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about them or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher will use a pseudonym rather than their real names. Any identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

The researcher will ensure that all materials collected, as part of this study, will be kept confidential. Electronic data will be kept in a password protected folder on the primary investigator personal computer. All physical documents will remain locked in a filing cabinet. Only the primary investigator will have access to these materials.

## **REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION**

The parents or guardians of student participants are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and they may refuse to do so. However, if they refuse to sign, their child cannot participate in this study.

## **CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION**



Parents or guardians of the student participants may withdraw consent to participate in this study at any time. Once they withdraw, any collected data associated with them or their interactions with the class

will be destroyed. In addition, the researcher will not record future data associated with the student participant or their interactions with the class. Parents and guardians of student participants also have the right to cancel their permission to use and disclose further information collected about them, in writing, at any time, by sending a written request to: *Molly Siuty, Department of Special Education, 5th Floor Joseph R. Pearson Hall, 122 West Campus Rd., Lawrence, KS 66045.* .

### **QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION**

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researchers listed at the end of this consent form. A copy of this consent statement is being provided for you to keep. We appreciate your cooperation very much.

Sincerely,

Molly Siuty (Principal Investigator) and Dr. Elizabeth Kozleski (Faculty Advis

## Consent to Participate

### PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as the parent or guardian of a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email [irb@ku.edu](mailto:irb@ku.edu).

I agree to allow my child to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

**Printed Name of Student:**

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**Printed Name of Parent or Guardian:**

---

**Sign Name:**

---

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,

Molly Siuty  
Principal Investigator  
Dept. of Special Education  
5<sup>th</sup> Fl. Joseph R. Pearson Hall  
122 West Campus Road  
Lawrence, KS 66045  
[molly.siuty@ku.edu](mailto:molly.siuty@ku.edu)  
570-242-2560

Dr. Elizabeth Kozleski  
Faculty Advisor  
Dept. of Special Education  
5<sup>th</sup> Fl. Joseph R. Pearson Hall  
122 West Campus Road  
Lawrence, KS 66045  
[elizabeth.kozleski@ku.edu](mailto:elizabeth.kozleski@ku.edu)  
303-884-8482

## APPENDIX K: VIDEO SHARE-TEACHERS



## Permission to Share Videos

Dear Participant,

As part of this project, I will be video recording one lesson period in your classroom. Please put your initials in the spaces below to give us permission to share these materials, and sign at the end of the release form. You are free to select none, some, or all of the options. Your name will not be revealed through these photos or video recordings.

### Permission for Sharing Video Recording:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The video recordings can be shown at scientific conferences or meetings.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The video recordings can be shown in classrooms to university students taking teacher preparation courses.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The video recording can be shown in public presentations to non-scientific groups.

Participant's  
Name:

Signature:

Date:

## APPENDIX L: VIDEO SHARE-PARENT/GUARDIAN



## Permission to Share Photos and Videos

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As part of this project, I will be video recording your child's teacher for one lesson period. Please put your initials in the spaces below to give me permission to share these materials, and sign at the end of the release form. You are free to select none, some, or all of the options. Your child's name and face will not be revealed through the video recordings but their voice may be audible.

### Permission for Sharing Video Recording:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The video recordings can be shown at scientific conferences or meetings.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The video recordings can be shown in classrooms to university students taking teacher preparation courses.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The video recording can be shown in public presentations to non-scientific groups.

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Child's Name:

Parent's Name:

Signature:

Date: